石踏一榮
ICHIEI ISHIBUMI
22
ハイスクール
DxD
卒業式のグレモリー
ファンタジア文庫

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卒業式のグレモリー

イッセーさま。
本物のパワーによる
恐怖というものを
大会を見ている
すべての者たちの
まぶたに焼き付けますわ

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Life.0

End of February———

More than twenty days had passed since the battle against Qlippoth———more specifically against Trihexa and the armies of Evil Dragons.

I, Hyoudou Issei, am currently very aroused but also very confused while being on a large bed!

“……I really want to graduate.”

The one who is looking at me with emotional eyes and saying that with a lustrous tone of voice is———a naked Akeno-san who is on top of me!

It happened just a moment ago. When I tried to go back to my room after taking a bath, I found myself lured into a secret room that had the same atmosphere as that erotic room!

On top of that, the one waiting for me inside that room was Akeno-san who wore a very transparent lingerie!

Apparently the Fallen Angels side, the Grigori, took interest in the doorknob that leads to a special erotic room, the one given to Irina from Michael-san. Thus, they created a new doorknob after receiving the blueprints of such technology from Heaven! The room Akeno-san and I are currently in is the doorknob type erotic room (the Grigori version)!

Akeno-san gave me such a lecture as she started taking off her lingerie……!

Akeno-san who was on top of me started to take off my clothing smoothly and had a determined expression on her face.

Akeno-san, who succeeded in stripping me leaving me with only my pants on, grabs my right hand and———presses it onto her breast! My five fingers, which are sinking into it, feel the incredibly soft sensation of a woman’s body, something that's also being sent to my whole hand!

Akeno-san then brings her face closer to mine and then tells me with a seductive voice.

“……Please, I want to engrave you inside me……!”

Akeno-san who is on top of me gradually leans her body onto my body.

……Her two enormous breasts touch me, leaving behind their soft sensation which only presses further against me as gravity pulls her down!

Her face approaches mine even more and exactly when our lips are about to overlap with each other.

“I found you.”

A sudden voice! When I look the way the voice is coming from I see Rias, who entered this erotic room without me noticing her presence!

Rias looks this way with her eyes half-open!

“Oh my, looks like we were caught.”

Akeno-san distances herself from me for a moment and says that while putting on a cheeky look.

“You shouldn’t underestimate my instinct.”

Looks like she found me by reading Akeno-san’s thoughts.

“Akeno, what on earth are you trying to———”

The action Akeno-san takes just while Rias is about to finish her sentence is———. Akeno-san’s soft lips overlap my lips.

A kiss with Akeno-san———. And she did it right in front of Rias!

My mouth was slightly agape since this kiss came from nowhere. And since Akeno-san kissed me when I was in such a state, her tongue easily came inside my mouth. Akeno-san’s tongue and my tongue wrap around each other. My brain starts to melt at Akeno-san’s bold and aggressive technique with her tongue.

A few minutes after our passionate kiss. Akeno-san takes her lips away from me while leaving a string of saliva connected between our tongues.

……

……My brain is about to burst at the sudden passionate deep kiss we just had.

Akeno-san then tells Rias.

“———It’s a special graduation ceremony for myself.”

Rias, who hears her say that, starts to make an adorable face and becomes enraged!

Are Rias and Akeno-san, who are also close to graduating from Kuou Academy, competing for a different kind of graduation ceremony!?

Rias looks at me while my brain is totally toasted. She walks towards the bed I am silently sitting on while making noise as she approaches. She then grabs my head tightly with both her hands.

When I thought she came closer to me———I found my lips overlapping with Rias's lips this time!

T-This time I'm sharing a deep kiss with Rias!

Our tongues start to tangle with each other, making it even more daring and passionate than the one I had with Akeno-san just before! One minute easily passed during our kiss! My head is about to blow at this sudden kiss! First I had Akeno-san put her tongue inside me, and now this time I'm having a deep kiss with Rias……!

Rias takes her head away from me and then mutters.

"……I guess I have washed over the kiss you had with Akeno just now with this? I cannot afford to lose!"

Rias, who just said that, starts to strip! She takes her bra off in such a daring manner that her incredible breasts bounce forward!

Rias takes my right hand! She then presses it onto her breast! The ultimate softness I can feel is something like that of an unbreakable pudding!

Akeno-san acts as if she won't lose this battle against Rias so she takes my left hand instead and she obviously presses it onto her own breast! The incredible feeling of both softness and smoothness is being sent from my left hand to my brain!

Lately there have only been intense battles so I feel a sense of nostalgia at this erotic situation! Because of that, it feels like my brain is melting down much quicker than ever before!

Rias. And Akeno-san. Both of them bring their faces closer to mine with such emotional eyes.

"……To become Ise's first woman……"

"……No, that is one thing I can't give up on. Now, Ise, come at me first……"

I’m getting pushed down by the two of theeeeeem!! There is no escape for me!

T-This may be the greatest battle bestowed on me……!

I never would have imagined that I would have to handle the two of them at once…… but maybe this is something which is sought from someone aiming to become a Harem King!?

Nevermind! Since I've come this far I shouldn’t resist and go with the flow and simply

be determined to do it……! No, maybe I need to talk it out with these two first……! But the softness of the womanly bodies of both Rias and Akeno-san are so deadly that it is tainting my brain……!

I already found myself starting to feel comfortable in going with this flow……but there were those who entered this room.

“Ise-sama! Ise-sama, I have big news for you!”

It’s Ravel! Maybe she came here by coincidence or maybe she found this place on her own.

Ravel then confirms me.

“So you were here……ah! I-It seems like I have interrupted whatever you were doing……!”

She goes all red at seeing the situation we are in. I got myself seen by my manager in this situation, which was so hard to explain to her!

But there are more intruders!

Xenovia, Irina, and Asia also came into this erotic room (Grigori version)!

This is what Xenovia and Irina say as soon as they enter.

“I knew this room would turn out to be like this! I did receive information about how the former Vice-president Akeno got her hand on the rumoured doorknob from the Grigori! Ku! I also want one for myself as well!”

“Geez! This was something I got from Michael-sama but I never imagined a similar tool would be developed so soon!”

Asia then says it as she looks around the room.

“I guess it's the right time each of the girls living in this house should receive their own special room!”

Akeno-san makes a slight glance and reveals a bitter smile as more girls enter the room.

“……I assume I would need a lock for this room in the future.”

Rias also distances herself from me as if it has ended.

“……No, the girls in this house would use any methods to unlock it. I guess each of us would need one like Asia said……”

Seriously!? So a time will come where each girl will receive this room!? I feel both happy but also uneasy since I don’t know when the girls will drag me into their room!

———Am I going to lose private time for myself like this from now!?

Rias then asks Ravel while leaving the distressed me behind.

“So then, Ravel. What was the reason for you to panic so much and come here……?”

Ravel, who was shocked the very second she came into the erotic room, starts to tell us her reason for being here.

“Oh yes, that’s right! T-Take a look at this!”

Ravel brings out her tablet.

“It will shock you.”

“This is big news!”

Xenovia and Irina both seem excited.

There is a video on the tablet held by Ravel. I’m guessing it’s from a television broadcast, a news program to be more precise, of the Underworld, judging from the use of the Devil’s symbols.

———More importantly, this symbol on the video……is describing something very incredible!

This is what the newscaster on the video is saying.

[———And so, regarding the Rating Game World Tournament which has finally been announced. It appears the discussion with each of the mythological forces has been settled and we received report that the preparations for the preliminary tournament is already underway in various locations. With this, the hypothesis of the teams that will pass the preliminaries are———]

This is what is written on the large subtitle of the news video.

———[All forces takes action! Rating Game World Tournament finally announced!]

And the content of what the newscaster was speaking about is the incoming Rating Game tournament, that is news explaining details related to the incoming tournament.

“……R-Ravel, this is……!”

The erotic feeling I had just before was blown away by this incredible revelation so I ask for Ravel’s opinion.

Ravel then says it straightforwardly.

“———Ise-sama. There was an emergency conference held by the leaders of each faction just before. This year there will be a Rating Game World Tournament in which all factions will be participating!”

———Rating Game World Tournament……!

The whole world……all forces……the Rating Game!? I-I certainly do remember how the higher-ups including Azazel-sensei were saying how fun it would be to do this in the future……!

Rias has her eyes glued on the screen and then narrows her eyes.

“……I see. So they brought this up at a time like this…… Did they fulfill Azazel and Onii-sama’s wishes……? No, was this the intent of Ajuka-sama and other VIPs……”

Rias starts to mumble on her own. It seems like she needs to think deeply about something.

Rias then says it after kissing my cheek.

“Ise, unfortunately we will have to continue what we were doing next time. Akeno, we will go to the Underworld first to confirm the current situation we are in. Follow me.”

“Yes, understood. Ufufu, it’s such a shame we had to end it like this.”

Saying that, Akeno-san also kisses me on the cheek, reverts back to her “Queen” mode and follows after Rias.

Rias and Akeno-san leave the erotic room as soon as they put their clothes on.

“Looks like we will be having a noisy Spring.”

My last and the biggest event in high school, since I will become a third year student soon, is about to begin. ———

Life.I
Those of us that were left behind!

Part I

What awaits high school students from the end of February to early March is———the end of semester test period.

I am lying dead on my table after completing all of my tests.

“Ah, the end of semester test period is finally over…..”

I don’t have the energy to think after using my brain beyond its limits…… Since the beginning of this year, no, ever since last year we had been fighting against Qlippoth, which was led by Rizevim the whole time. So doing these tests, a thing which you have to do at certain times actually drains out my energy more than necessary.

……Those monsters didn’t give us the leisure to let us study under peaceful times at all.

Then the Church-trio approach my desk. Asia then says.

“We sure did fall behind in our studies due to the many things that happened to us.”

“We had to continue with our school life even while fulfilling our duties. You sure did overwork yourself.”

Irina says that to me while massaging my shoulders.

“I’m having fun though. Both of them are worth doing.”

The one who answers her in such an energetic manner is Xenovia.

Irina sighs after taking a look at Xenovia who is in high spirits.

“I am also having fun but you have too much energy in you.”

“Fufufu, I am the student council president after all. I won’t be able to do anything if there was no energy in me.”

Xenovia answers in such a manner. She sure did become more energetic ever since she became the student council president.

———Then the usual two dudes appear within my line of sight.

“Oh, Ise! How was the test?”

“Don’t tell me you wrote perverted answers down when answering the questions?”

It was the perverted duo, the glasses and the baldy.

“Oh, Matsuda and Motohama. How did you guys do?”

When I asked, they put on a meaningful smirk.

“Fufufu, did you know we may actually do well this time?”

“Well, we did as much as we could after all.”

They usually cry in agony after the tests. Though this time they have quite the confidence.

However, the smile they had just a moment ago changes into a flow of tears! Then Motohama and Matsuda speak!

“I ended up studying alone with Matsuda of all people because you ignored us every time we called you to study with us! ……Thanks to that we ended up actually learning damn it!”

“I so wanted to study at your place Ise so we could study together with Asia-chan and other girls aaagh!”

T-That’s what happened huh. So they studied together.

I do remember seeing their names appear on the missed calls list on my mobile phone. Though I also had intense battles and so many shocking things happened so I didn’t have the time to be concerned about these two.

They start to make complaints while shedding tears of blood.

“There is Rias-senpai and Himejima-senpai who are the Two Great Onee-samas of our academy as well as the Three Beauties of our class consisting of Asia-chan, Xenovia-chan, and Irina-chan that are all living in your house! On top of that, Toujou Koneko-chan and Ravel Phoenix-chan who are the most popular girls among the first years are also living in your house!”

“Even the beautiful teacher from Northern Europe, Rossweisse-chan, is also home staying at your place! Your place is obviously the best as well as the greatest location to open up a study session, god dammit!”

These guys only have dirty thoughts! Damn you guys! There’s no way I’ll let you study together with Rias and Asia! The only one who can look at the girls staying at my place with a dirty gaze is me! This is a privilege only given to me!

Though it seems like their learning went smoothly thanks to their wish not being fulfilled……!

I inhaled some air and then say this to them.

“……Well, a lot happened to me as well. Y-You know a lot happened because there are many girls from overseas who are staying at my place. I apologise for not answering your calls.”

It is true that the girls at my place were having rough times and it is also true that I was so busy I couldn’t answer their calls. I am not lying!

Then the girl with glasses appeared as the sunlight shined onto her glasses.

“Ah, the unpopular guy and the even more unpopular guy of the Three Idiots are causing a ruckus. Don’t spread your unpopular bacteria to us.”

Motohama and Matsuda who hear her say that bite into her words.

“Curse you, Kiryuu! You called us the unpopular guy and the even more unpopular guy!?”

“Who is who!? You need to make that part very cleaaaaaar!”

The desperate cries of these two lads. Though Kiryuu ignored their words easily like usual……

Then Motohama changes the topic and says this.

“But you know, it sure was a shock. ———About Azazel-sensei, that is.”

……

……The ORC girls and I became silent.

Matsuda continues.

“Ah, that’s true! I never imagined that he would go back to his country without saying anything.”

Motohama continues after him.

“Those students who adored him seemed like they couldn’t hide their shock. Azazel-sensei’s lessons were really popular after all.”

……Azazel-sensei was the teacher at this academy who quit due to certain circumstances. That’s what was told to the students.

Matsuda asks.

“Ise, you guys know something about this right? He was the supervisor of ORC.”

“Ah, yeah…… Something happened to his family back in his country. We are…… also shocked.”

That’s the only answer I have for his question.

……Yeah, Azazel-sensei……is no longer here. ……He isn’t dead but he's gone to a place where he can't be reached.

It appears like the Church-trio are also in deep thought. That's why they also had gloomy expressions.

“……”

“……”

“……”

Kiryuu, who is aware of our identities, obviously knows the real circumstances behind this issue so she works hard to change the mood.

“Now, now, all of you. Don’t make such sad faces. It’s not like we aren’t going to see him ever again, is it?I am sure we will be seeing him in the future. You know the way Azazel sensei is. Maybe he will just settle the issue he has and we might see him when we are walking down the street.”

“Y-Yeah, you are right.”

I also try my best to put on a smile.

……Everyone has been acting like this ever since Sensei left. Rias, Akeno-san, the first year members, and Rossweisse-san have been putting on a sad expression at times.

To tell you the truth I still can't believe this happened. I can't help but think he left for his usual long visit and I still think he will pop up from nowhere by saying "Yo! I'm back!" to us.

But this is something which might happen in the future and after an eternity-like wait.

……I obviously do understand the reasons and the circumstances for his disappearance.

———But Sensei. We can't help but feel lonely……

On top of that, there's the Rating Game World Tournament. I heard there is also my promotion to a High-class Devil……and combining it with Sensei's disappearance……

If I have to describe my true feelings then I must confess that I am feeling pretty unsettled———

Thus the tests week ended and the new Occult Research Club resumed its usual club activity.

We are currently preparing for the new semester at the clubroom. We, the new ORC members, are checking the schedule as we surround the table.

Kiba then hands the documents to Asia.

"Asia-buchou, these are the programs for the new semester."

Asia is looking through the documents as she sits on the club president's seat.

"Thank you. The preparation for the beginning of our new school year and the experience session for the new students joining this school,huh. We really do have a lot of events happening at the start of the new school year as I imagined."

She's right. In approximately one month's time the new semester will start and we will all be entering our third year. On top of that, the new first year students will be enrolling in this academy so we need to start to organise the school events once again.

Asia says it emotionally as if she was looking back at her experiences.

"We are finally going to be third-year students. Many things happened this past year but it feels as though the time went through so quickly……"

Yeah, time sure flies.

It's almost been a year since I became a Devil. I reincarnated into a Devil in April last year……

I can then hear the conversation of the first year trios.

“……We are almost going to become second year students. We are going to have juniors from next month, Gya-kun.”

“I-It will be fine Koneko-chan! Even I should be able to act like their senior!”

Gasper, who is now able to appear in front of people, showed some improvements in his growth but I still don’t know whether he is able to act like a senior to those younger than him. I sure do hope you can show them that you are their senior, Gya-suke.

“We do have to advertise in order to gather members next month.”

Ravel says that as she stores away the documents.

That’s right. That’s also an important duty we need to do so that the club keeps running. However, gathering new members that are ordinary folks for the ORC, which has special circumstances behind it, it is……quite hard. Except, it seems like we still need to recruit people just in case since that’s also part of the school curriculum for clubs.

……I really need to ask Kiba afterwards in details about how they were recruiting new members last year.

Then Kiba says.

“The people that are affiliated with us and are joining this academy are Le Fay-san, Kunou-san, and Tosuka. The former student president Sona……no, it’s probably better for me to start calling her Sona-sama. Anyway, from the Sitri-side there will be Bennia-san who will be enrolling here.”

We actually have quite a number of people affiliated with us that are enrolling here. Furthermore, Le Fay and Bennia want to join this club. Kunou also seems like she will be coming here after school when her grade school classes finish for the day.

Though the one who I’m most surprised with among those transferring here is———

“I see, so Tosuka-san decided to enroll here.”

Kiba acts kind of shy when I ask him.

“Though she will be enrolling in middle school. I am sure she will be coming here after school so I hope everyone can get along with her.”

Even she decided to transfer! Not many days passed since she started living in Japan. But apparently she stated that she wishes to attend a normal school just like Kiba. There was no way Rias wouldn’t allow this so Tosuka-san’s transfer to this school was approved right away.

I am sure she may find a bit difficult going to her first school ever, plus in a country she isn't used to yet———

“Then we will all support her.”

Everyone nods hearing my opinion. No, even if I didn’t say that everyone here will help Tosuka-san anyway. After all, this is the place where those from all sorts of forces gather and live friendly together.

Then Xenovia speaks as if something came to her mind after listening to Kiba.

“……I guess we should also be concerned about how we address our seniors. Rias……-sama? I’m sure Asia will call her “Onee-sama” but I’m quite concerned in how to address her in front of everyone in our group now. Or should I also call her “Onee-sama”……?”

Rias, Akeno-san, and the former student president Sona will be graduating soon. I guess it would be weird calling them “former club president” or “former student president”…… What Xenovia is saying is very true. Right now Asia is the club president and Xenovia is the student council president.

I then ask Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper.

“I’m sure Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper will experience the most difficulties in figuring out on how to call her from now on, right?”

The three of them are currently calling her “former club president” or sometimes “buchou” due to their past experience. But they may need to rethink on how to call her after she graduates. If those who join here hear them calling her buchou then they would might be confused in understanding who's the club president or the student council president.

———Then Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper all turn red and then say this.

“……To tell you the truth, we already decided on how to call her. Well, we will start using it once she graduates.”

“……Yes, we will change how we address her once she graduates. W-We will also need to discuss it with Ise-senpai afterwards.”

“T-This is a momentous decision for me~!”

Hmm, the three of them are acting so embarrassed but it seems like they know how they will address Rias after her graduation. Now then, looks like I will need to ask them later on what they are planning to do.

……Oh well, it’s not just about the transfer students and Rias’s graduation;the spring season is also approaching so there will be many changes.

Those changes will bring a turnaround in our life———. Obviously there's the issue about myself becoming a High-class Devil and beyond that, but it is also the time where we need to continue with our life while having a view of what we will be doing in the future.

I say it while looking outside through the window.

“Well, I guess we are at that time of the year…… We need to think a lot about the future. It will be college for me after graduating. Well, I guess it’s no different for all the second years here. But did all of you decide on what you will do after that? I guess I didn’t ask you guys about it much.”

Basically what they will do after graduating from college. All the members here will most likely go on to study at college but I guess I didn’t ask them much about what they will do after that.

Kiba then says.

“I am planning to save up money while helping former club-president Rias with her work.”

“Saving? Are you planning to start something?”

Kiba then makes a gesture using both his hands. A gesture like he is mixing something inside a bowl.

“Yup, I started to think it might be a good idea to open a cake shop in Kuoh town. Well, since we have a long Devil life we can do anything, though you would need funds to do so.”

So he has the ambition of starting a cake shop! Yeah, Kiba being the owner of a cake shop actually might suit him. Furthermore, the cakes he makes are———

“Since the cheesecake I make is Ise-kun’s favourite, it might be a good idea to make sure you can eat it anytime you want to.”

That’s what Kiba says. Yeah, the cheesecakes he makes are absolutely delicious.

Kiba is quite skilled with his hands and he’s good at any kind of cooking. So he might be able to do various things aside from baking.

Xenovia then says.

“I……want to focus on a teaching career.”

So that’s your goal huh. Well, that sure is unexpected……no,actually it isn’t. She did study a whole lot ever since she aimed to become the student council president so the image of her being a muscle-brain actually got weaker.

“I started to think it might be a good idea to make a cram school in the human world and in the Underworld for students aiming to progress into the upper education level. Well, I don’t have a clear vision about it yet, so the idea it’s still vague.”

Xenovia starting a cram school! That’s a shocking ambition coming from her……but like Kiba said we have a long Devil life so there’s no loss in coming with many plans. Even I can’t imagine what new ambition I will have in hundred years’ time.

Irina puts on a complicated expression and tilts her head after hearing Kiba and Xenovia share their future plans.

“Hmm, the peers around me unexpectedly have been thinking about their career paths after graduating and also thought about their future.”

“Irina, will you be working in an industry related to the Gremory in the future…… actually I guess you wouldn’t. Will it be related to Heaven?”

I ask. The Gremory will obviously welcome not only us with open arms, but also Irina, who's our comrade,will be warmly welcomed if we ask them. Though if you think logically, Irina will obviously seek for a job related to the Church.

Irina then says.

“I am planning to go to the college division of Kuoh academy. Though I still haven’t

decided on whether I will be working in a place affiliated with the Church or to do something else. I am allowed to do anything I wish as long as I gather at the emergency meetings. Even so, I won't know what will happen few years in the future…… Except――――"

Irina suddenly turns silent. She then continues in a low voice while acting shy.

"……I……am thinking that it might be fun to start a bakery shop in the future."

Wow wow! So Irina is starting a bakery shop! She did take care of that home bakery machine delicately so maybe she wanted to make a genuine bread?

Xenovia then continues.

"Yeah, I was shocked when I saw you write that on the sheet asking us about what career path we wanted to take. You want to start a proper bakery shop, right?"

Irina nods.

"Yes. To tell you the truth I have been studying about it lately. I'm learning under Rias-san and Akeno-san's supervision. ……Please wait a bit longer and it'll appear on the dining table."

Hmm, I'm looking forward to that.

Rias and Akeno-san can bake bread as well. The truth is we have a bakery-type oven installed at the Hyoudou residence. We also have a pizza oven on the rooftop.

Xenovia then says this while putting on a provoking smile.

"By the way, Irina's second option was ――― becoming a bride. Though she erased it right away."

Even Asia becomes all bright at hearing this.

"That is a wonderful dream!"

Irina grasps hold of Xenovia's head.

"H-Hey, Xenovia! D-Don't go around telling everyone about it!"

Everyone has smiles on their face at seeing Irina becoming all embarrassed.

Oh my. That sure is a princess-like dream she has there. Or should I say a dream any girl would have? It sure is reassuring to hear such a dream when we are talking about future. Man, it really does feel as if we are living in a peaceful world again.

However, Irina sighs deeply.

"Except, starting a bakery is a bit difficult unlike becoming a bride."

"Why's that?"

Irina then answers me.

"I guess it's because the condition of the Heaven is pretty unstable right now. The higher-ups seem like they want to fill the Seraphs and higher-up's seats in the future. So it seems like they will be asking powerful reincarnated Angels to fill in those roles

too. This is what my papa told me. He said that there's plenty of chances for them to ask me in the future, since I am fighting on this land. If that happens I won't have the time to start a bakery. For Heaven. For the Church. And for our followers. I may have to put all my efforts in fulfilling my duty then. It really is an honorable position but it will also bring high expectations and obligations."

[……]

Everyone puts on a serious face at Irina's words.

……Yeah, I did feel reassured at the peaceful talk we just had. But we haven't fixed all of the aftermath of the battle now known as the War of Evil Dragons. The main forces of each faction headed out to fight a very long battle against Trihexa and you could pretty much say that each force lost a lot of power as well. So the matter becomes serious from here on. Even Heaven lost several Seraphs, which were their core members, and many Angels died in the various battles. So even Irina would be sought for assistance from the Heaven from now on. That battle definitely affected our future path.

Trihexa and the Evil Dragons went on a rampage in the territory of each of the forces. They also showed up in the human world where they destroyed several islands, armies, and nature. The casualties the human world received weren't as severe as the damage dealt in the territories of the mythology factions. I heard that thanks to the efforts of God-class individuals of each faction, who were giving their all in repairing and restoring their territories, the damaged territories are returning to their original state.

Though it won't be that easy in regards to the lives lost in that battle. The God-class beings that took damage are forced to spend a long time for their return. It was already bad enough by losing the leading Gods of each force against the battle with Trihexa.

Likewise for the humans. ……I wonder just how many lives were lost because of Trihexa's attack. No, just how many humans lost their lives since Rizevim started wreaking havoc……

Though people are saying the casualties we received were much lighter than what we expected for the worse…… I, no, we attained many things by getting involved in a large-scale war for the first time but we also lost an equal amount of things.

…..And the Rating Game World Tournament is about to happen under such circumstances.

From what Rias heard in the Underworld the joint top brass of the tournament organising committee are Ajuka Beelzebub-sama and ———Shiva the God of Destruction from the Hindu mythology. This news spread like fire among each forces.

The God of Destruction, who never took action no matter what, chose to be part of the World Rating Game tournament organising committee. That's something no one would have predicted.

The tournament committee has already started gathering registrations and participants.

There are obviously criticisms in starting a game in a situation like this. There have been voices about their intentions from many parts of the world.

However there are those that have showed interest in participating right away from various parts of the world. This is what they said in the interview that happened in the Underworld.

———This is a chance we can't ask more for. We were given the stage where the legendary beings are allowed to clash head on officially. We do understand the criticism. But don't you want to see it? The Angels and the Devils. Just which one is stronger? The Norse Gods and the Greek monsters. What will happen when they go head on?

This interview spread among each forces and it stimulated the curiosity and the battling spirits of many people.

The match-ups you could only imagine or dream about. It has become officially "approved" so the number of those who want to see it are increasing each and every day it passes by.

And also one more thing. The winning prize. This is something unbelievable so this also brought the curiosity of the participants greatly.

Obviously the number of participants has increased after the announcement.

Even we……are burning with desire at hearing that interview. I'm sure it's the same for Vali and Sairaorg-san———

There's a rumour that the tournament steering committee is planning to put some energy into the people by getting them heated up by showing them the matches of the upcoming tournament. I also heard that the money profited during the tournament, such as ticket sales, will be donated to the repair fund of all forces.

What's shocking is that the tournament fund will be coming from the pocket money of the Maou-samas, the Grigori leaders, and Shiva. I'm sure the prize money will have crazy figures, since it'll be coming from Sirzechs-sama and Azazel-sensei's inheritances (the pocket money and inheritance will obviously go to the restoration of each forces).

……To send the money gained from the tournament to the restoration funds huh. If the higher-ups of the Underworld that are currently being prosecuted for their crimes were involved, then it would be totally fishy. Though I guess I can trust this one since Ajuka-sama and others are working behind the scenes.

……I ended up thinking about the complicated stuff. Uggh, I sure did get a weird habit ever since I reincarnated into a Devil. I feel that I started to ponder more about things than I used to in the past.

Kiba then says it and changes the topic.

"Well, right now the main issue is Ise-kun's future……or more like the promotion since it will also be a major event for us too."

"You are right. Who would ever have thought that he would be promoted to a High-class Devil within one year. To be expected from the man I thought highly of. It sure

is.”

Xenovia continues after Kiba by saying that.

That’s right. The achievement I attained during the War of Evil Dragon――― such as beating Rizevim and defeating Apophis. Because of that the number of people that want me to be promoted has increased drastically. The higher-ups of the Devils approved it and it was finally decided (the truth is there are talks about the members of our group that are Low-class Devil getting promoted to a Mid-class Devil).

There’s going to be a High-class Devil promotion ceremony for me in the Underworld and I am currently receiving words of applause and gifts which are being sent to my house from the people with high positions.

The High-class Devil which I have been yearning for so much―――. I will be given the right to create my own group.

……

……I, who was in high spirits by strongly shouting out my lecherous ambition. “I’m going to be a High-class Devil and create a group full of girls and become a Harem King!”. What came to my mind when I fulfilled that ambition of mine was…..happiness which also came with the realisation that you cannot attain everything with satisfaction.

……I attained many things by coming this far but it’s not like I didn’t lose much because of it. Perhaps attaining something means losing something as well.

……Azazel-sensei, even a bit of words would had been fine. I truly wanted to get some advice from you.

―――Am I allowed to become a Harem King? Am I allowed to drown in a sea of breasts?

Maybe I need to act while keeping in mind about my surroundings even more in order to become both a professional adult and Devil?

……Hey, Sensei? What would you say if you saw me now?

Such complicated thoughts are going through my head every day lately. And it seems like everyone knows that as well.

Perhaps Irina read my mind so she asks me while looking into my face.

“It’s been on my mind for a while but it seems like you have mixed feelings about it, don’t you?”

I say it while exaggerating my joy.

“W-Well, I am happy about it. I’m super happy and I feel honoured!”

But I tell them my true thoughts. They are my comrades after all.

“But……if it looks like I’m having mixed feelings about it in your eyes then I have to say that you are right about it. ……Too many things happened and even if I do understand that with my brain, I still find a part of me not accepting the past events. I

have a cloudy feeling. It doesn't feel like it's happening for real. It feels like I'm experiencing someone else's life, even the part which involves myself."

Others also put on a complicated look when they listen to my words.

Asia got off from her club president's seat to approach me and then she held my hand. She says it with a smile.

"I wouldn't be able to solve all of Ise-san's concerns……but I do feel honoured that Ise-san will become a High-class Devil. Therefore, I want to congratulate you from the bottom of my heart. ———Congratulation, Ise-san."

———!

……I became so emotional at Asia's warm and straightforward words. I hug Asia on the spot!

Ah, my Asia-chan makes me feel relieved simply by saying things like these! Yeah, a simple remark of congratulation like this unexpectedly goes straight into your heart.

While we are doing such things, Ravel acts like a good manager and says it in a calm manner.

"However, even if it doesn't feel like reality there will be many people appearing before your eyes. You may feel the sense of being a High-class Devil from such situation. You will most likely become the most anticipated High-class Devil rookie in the whole Underworld."

Many people will……come before me huh. ……And being anticipated huh. Though that means I have to be aware of possible enemies as well……

If there are those that finds it painful in the freedom I seek for, then it means there are those that won't be happy at my promotion.

Yeah, it looks like I will have more troubles to face than before. It's nostalgic when I remember about a year ago when I was aiming to become a Harem King with simply lecherous thoughts. To myself a year ago: You know that you won't be going through only fun times to become a High-class Devil?

Damn! I simply want to think about breasts! I'm going to jump into Rias's breast when I get back home! No, it might be a good idea to get spoiled by Akeno-san too!

———Truly, "What does it mean to become a High-class Devil?"!

I am currently going through a lot of concerns———.

It happens then. There's a sudden knock to the door. Asia answers by saying "Come in".

Who is it? When everyone looks in suspicions———the one who comes in by opening the door is one male student.

"Pardon me. Is Kaichou———oh, you are here after all."

As he says that he breathes out the air from his mouth when he finds Xenovia.

He then walks towards Xenovia while letting his footsteps resonate.

“Xenovia-kaichou, you are here. I have completed the report from before so I want you to confirm it.”

The male students who hands out the document to Xenovia. I……think I’ve seen him before. More like he’s quite known among the students.

Xenovia responds to the boy in a familiar manner.

“Ouryuu. Alright, show me.”

She calls the boy with that name and looks through the documents after receiving them.

The boy looks at all of us and looks at the whole room as if it’s a rare sight.

Xenovia realises it and then asks him.

“Oh, haven’t you introduced yourself to everyone here yet?”

The boy takes a breath again as he smiles.

“Yes, and it’s almost about a month since you told me you would introduce me to everyone, Kaichou.”

Xenovia makes a bitter smile.

“Sorry, I totally forgot.”

Xenovia makes the boy stand right next to her and introduces him to us.

“He’s the secretary of our student council who is a first year and———”

“Nakiri Kouchin Ouryuu is my name. I have heard many rumours about all of you.”

———As such, the first year student called Nakiri Kouchin Ouryuu, who is the secretary of the student council, introduces himself to us.

We already knew his name when the members of the new student council were announced and I also saw this boy when Xenovia was walking through the corridor while having the new members of the student council walk behind her. The name and the face matches.

……Though there was a part of his name I didn’t know about……

“It sure is a long name.”

I couldn’t help myself but say that.

Nakiri gives me a brief explanation.

“Kouchin is my posthumous name. It’s basically like a middle name. So just Nakiri Ouryuu is fine.”

Ah, I think I heard people from old times using such names.

Ravel and Gasper who are also first year responds to Nakiri’s entrance.

“It’s rare to meet you here.”

“Hello, Nakiri-kun.”

Nakiri also responds to them by raising his hand.

“Yo, the usual trio.”

Ah, so he knows them. There’s a connection among the first years that I don’t know about.

“……Kohchin, are you working?”

Koneko-chan asks while eating a stick-like sweet.

“Yeah, I have business with President. Also, please stop calling me that name with that intonation…… I hate it because it sounds like Nagoya Kohchin.”

Nakiri says it while acting a bit depressed.

……So he has the nickname called Kohchin huh. Well, it’s a bombastic name but his middle name really has a bell to it which is easy to make a nickname for him.

Asia and Irina also responds to Nakiri.

“Nakiri……wasn’t it one of the five clans?”

“It’s the leading clan, wasn’t it? On top of that his name is “Ouryuu” which is the same name of the Spiritual Beast which represents the Nakiri clan……”

Nakiri nods.

“Yes, I’m the heir of the Nakiri clan. Currently, that is. ……Well, four years ago the previous “Ouryuu” caused trouble with the Hakuryuukou and Ikuse Tobio-san……”

The heir!? T-This guy!? The heir of Nakiri clan which is the leading clan of the five clans…… Man, I did think that he has a special position within the Nakiri clan but who would have ever thought he would be the heir…… I sure do encounter many heirs of noted families……

And did something happen to the previous “Ouryuu” four years ago? Hmm, I’m really intrigued by it. I might ask Vali next time.

Four years ago is when Vali met Tobio-san and back then I heard the Grigori as well as the groups full of special power users were in quite a mess.

Xenovia crosses her arms and nods.

“Ouryuu is quite amazing. After all, he is given a special position under the Maou Ajuka Beelzebub. Wasn’t it the search for the remaining Longinuses?”

———!

……This is a shocking revelation. Seriously? Searching for the remaining Longinuses under Ajuka Beelzebub-sama. Is it perhaps the rumoured two types ———the “Innovate Clear” and “Telos Karma”? It caught my interest.

Then is he perhaps involved in the mobile phone “game” that’s created by Maou-sama?

Nakiri says it with a mixed look.

“……How should I put it. That person put me in charge of the complicated stuff so he assigns me with such reckless tasks……”

……Looks like he went through experiences which can’t be explained in one sentence.

“Oh well, ask me anything when you want to. My comrades and I will help.”

I simply told him that. I won’t feel good if someone I met gets dragged into trouble and gets hurt.

Nakiri replies honestly by saying, “Yes, when something happens in the “game”, then I will definitely contact you.”

———Then Nakiri comes and stands in front of me and then says it after fixing his posture.

“Hyoudou Issei-senpai of the Sekiryuutei.”

“Y-Yeah, what’s up?”

Nakiri suddenly bows his head to me.

“The truth is I see you as my role model. You possess the Longinus of Welsh Dragon in you while you are just a normal high school student. But even though you were put into so many dangerous situations you overcame all of them. ———I wish to live like you by attaining a power that I can use to fight against my own destiny.”

Nakiri who stands straight again has this expression. ——— A serious expression with clear and straight eyes.

……O-Oh man, it’s embarrassing! To have him say that straight to my face! I-It sure does feel itchy to be said that from a boy younger than me!

I then say this while waving my hands.

“You are flattering me too much. I simply tried to cope with the unreasonable kind of situations which fell on me.”

“That’s the thing I am impressed about. Hyoudou-senpai, there’s many things I wish to learn from you. Please tell me if something happens. I shall become the support of all of you. I’m sure Ajuka-san will allow it too.”

D-Does he have some kind of weird feeling towards me? When I look at Xenovia,

“Ouryuu wanted to meet you for a long time, Ise. I always forgot of it when I kept on making promises to him. So he was able to finally meet you today.”

……So he basically made an excuse of finding Xenovia to hand her the documents in order to come here?

I-I’m really embarrassed. This is more nerve-wracking than to have a girl say something which makes you skip a beat! It’s a different kind of feeling I get from Gasper who is also a male and is my junior!

“Thanks. I will definitely remember that.”

———That’s the best I could say.

Then Xenovia whispers into my ear.

(If something really happens then we should call him. Ise, Ouryuu is truly strong. He’s in a different league among those with special powers.)

(Seriously?)

He is the heir of Nakiri that is the leading clan of the Japanese special power users. It’s natural that he is strong despite his young age.

I’m also curious about Ajuka Beelzebub-sama’s “game” so maybe I should try it through Nakiri’s connection?

When I was thinking about how I should get along with my junior———we hear a knock on the door again.

The one who comes in this time is a crimson-haired beauty. ———It’s Rias!

This is what Rias says soon as she comes in.

“Is Ise here———? Oh, there you are.”

Rias confirms my presence.

“Hmm? You need me?”

I point at myself where Rias nods her head and then says this.

“Yes, there is a guest waiting for you. ———Come to the Kuoh town’s underground with me.”

It seems I will come to experience straight away what Ravel said before about many kinds of people appearing in front of me if I am to become a High-class Devil.

I, who left the club work to Asia and Kiba, visited one of the spaces which exists in Kuoh town’s underground together with Rias and Ravel.

What I saw is———a Dragon which measured ten metres high. That Dragon has an appearance which looks familiar and the aura I feel around him is also familiar.

The Dragon bows his head and is pretty much lying flat on the ground when he sees me.

“This is my first time coming before your eyes. I am the third son of the Blazing Meteor Dragon Tannin and Bova is my name.”

———!

……I am shocked at the Dragon’s words. He’s old man Tannin’s kid!? No wonder his appearance and aura felt similar to his! His appearance surely reminds me of old man Tannin and his aura is identical to him!

Bova, who is the third son of Tannin, speaks once again.

“I came here to ask you for a request, Sekiryuutei of the Blazing Truth――― Hyoudou Issei-sama. ―――I have come as I eagerly want you to accept me as your retainer!”

M-My retaineeeeeeeeeeer!?

……T-This is unexpected and I also am quite unsure about this, to the point that I don’t know how to react to this……

Ravel, who is standing next to me, whispers into my ear.

(He’s a famous ruffian in the Underworld where he received a disparaging name called “Bova the Destroyer”. He’s well known for his bad attitude which makes you think he possibly couldn’t be the son of Tannin-sama when his father is respected by the Dragons.)

This time Rias whispers into my other ear.

(Except, it’s true that he’s called the strongest among Tannin-sama’s children.)

……”Bova the Destroyer”! The Underworld’s ruffian! But he’s also the strongest among old man Tannin’s kids!

……More like this is my first time finding out that old man Tannin had kids. No, it wouldn’t be strange if he had kids but……the old man also had a wife huh. And it seems like he has many kids.

And old man Tannin’s third son came all the way here to Kuoh town and said he wants to become my retainer.

……H-Hmm, I don’t know how to answer since this is so abrupt! Maybe I should consult with old man Tannin? No, it feels like his third son came here in secret and it seems like this talk will go somewhere else if I talk to his parent.

……I already have my hands full due to many things happening to me including the new semester, the new grade level, and the promotion to a High-class Devil. I guess there will be more issues coming at me from now on which will make me have more concerns……

“Hmm, so by that you mean……you want to become my servant?”

When I ask, the old man’s third son becomes really surprised and waves his hand to reject my assumption.

“Oh no! I’m not here to ask you for such a big role! I have heard you will become a High-class Devil! And I also heard that you have the ambition to form your group with only female servants once you get promoted! That rumour has already reached my ear so there’s no way I can allow myself to ask you for that! Except, it would be my greatest joy if you would allow me to stand beside you as your mere subordinate and as your soldier!”

He bows his head even further and he’s flat on the ground again.

……He seems like a strong Dragon and he already has an amazing status of being

old man Tannin's son. So it's hard for me to react since he's acting so stiff towards me~

The Dragon———, Bova, says further to push his request.

"Can you please allow me to stand beside you?"

This guy is also looking straight into my eyes just like Nakiri did before.

……Oh man, just look at the situation I am in. What am I supposed to do? That's the only words coming into my head. ……I really have been saying I'm "troubled" or "oh man" since before.

"How about it, Ise?"

Rias tries to confirm with me. If he was simply my guest, then Rias, who is my master, would have sent him off and would have told him to come another day…… Bova came to rely on me who will become a High-class Devil. Rias asked me by understanding that.

……Not becoming my servant but my subordinate huh. Well, once you become a High-class Devil you will also have a retainer and henchmen besides your servants. Even if they aren't a direct servant, there are many workers and soldiers at the Gremory castle. And he's saying he's okay with being one of my soldiers.

———Not becoming my "Pawn" but simply my soldier.

"……Is it okay for me to give you my answer once I become a High-class Devil?"

That's the best answer I can give him right now.

In the end, Bova became convinced with my words and returned home……

……From now on I will be getting more juniors at my school and once I become a High-class Devil I need to think about my other subordinates and not just my servants.

I have so much troubles going through my head and Rias says it as she smiles to me.

"Being a High-class Devil is something full of concerns you know?"

She then holds me gently.

"But your senior and your manager are always beside you so you can consult us anytime, okay?"

……Yeah, she's right. That's absolutely right. Fortunately, I have Rias and Ravel behind me. So I don't have to be concerned just by myself, right……?

Ravel takes my hand and smiles.

"She's right. Ise-sama, you have been putting on a difficult expression all the time lately. Please consult with us when you are concerned. I also come from a High-class Devil household you know?

Yeah, I have many comrades and High-class Devils around me.

Too many things happened which made it hard for my brain to keep up with. But I can simply ask my “seniors” when I’m in doubt.

Just a bit is fine———. I can simply take it step by step and come to understand it bit by bit.

———Azazel-sensei.

I will do my best!

Part 2

It happens the next weekend.

All of us living in the Hyoudou residence came to the ocean, an inhabited island. In order to have a fishing run, that is.

“Alright! I sure am going to fish them out! Ask me anything when you need a word of advice!”

[Yeah~!]

My comrades (mainly ORC members) respond to my dad’s words.

That’s what my dad, who's the one in charge, said in high spirits as he is the one who came up with the idea to go fishing.

Yes, yesterday during dinner the fishing topic my dad started became an hot topic so we decided to go fishing immediately after listening to his passionate talk.

Everyone was eager to do so therefore everything happened smoothly after many preparations.

So that’s how I ended up coming here to the beach together with everyone. By the way this inhabited island belongs to someone related to us and they say that you can catch many good fishes around here.

“……Geez, he’s in high spirits like a child.”

I’m feeling a bit embarrassed at how my dad is behaving. Well, its normal to feel embarrassed if your own dad acts like a child in front of your comrades!

“Tell me when you get hungry. I’ve prepared rice balls and snacks.”

———Mum says that as she points at the large basket. Mum sets up the parasol on the beach of the inhabited island to make a base. Rias and Akeno-san are also helping her.

Yup, I can just go where mum is waiting when I want to take a small break.

Dad isn’t the only one in high spirits. There are many girls that are keen in fishing ever since we planned to do this today.

Xenovia and Irina are in high spirits and are carrying their fishing rod from their shoulders.

“Xenovia! Let’s have a challenge to see who of us can catch the most fish!”

“Bring it on, Irina!”

Xenovia and Irina went sprinting through the beach to find a fishing spot while dragging Asia with them.

“I will catch them while diving into the beach.”

Rossweisse-san headed towards the sea in her wetsuit while carrying a harpoon with her. Rossweisse-san sure do acts in amusing ways sometimes. Ah, but catching them while diving into the sea doesn't seem a bad idea either.

Besides, there's an interesting bunch of lads with us today.

"Well, I never imagined that you will be joining us today."

The one standing in my sight is———the Vali team!

"Fu, doing things like this at times might not be a bad idea."

Vali smirks as he prepares his fishing rod.

Dad explained about his fishing plan and invited Vali who happened to visit the Hyoudou residence in coincidence. Then what happened was a surprise! Vali brought Bikou and Arthur with him when they all appeared in the Hyoudou residence this morning!

……I am confused by the Vali team's action at times. They want to go to many places. I even come to think that they are normal adventurers at times.

Right beside us are Kuroka, Koneko-chan, Ravel, Gasper, and Valerie who have formed a group and are currently finding their own fishing spots.

"Shirone! Birdie-chan! Gya-kun and Valerie! Do your best! I will eat the delicious fish once you catch them –nyaan~"

Koneko-chan responds to Kuroka with a dumbfounded look to Kuroka who has no intention of fishing.

"……We definitely won't give any fishes to Onee-sama."

Ravel is spinning around the reel in excitement.

"I have never been fishing before."

"It's my first time too~"

"Ufufu, I will just be cheering Gasper on then."

Gasper seems to be enjoying himself and Valerie is also smiling happily while wearing a straw hat.

Valerie succeeded in retrieving all of the Holy Grails into her body. The Grigori did a checkup for her and now she's able to walk outside normally like this.

It seems like the pendant which was made from a fragment of the actual Holy Grail is continuing to give effect to the "Sephiroth Grail" which returned to its original state. The Grigori made the report that as long as she doesn't extensively overuse her ability then it won't affect her mentality.

In other words Valerie can finally walk outside without any concern.

……Yeah, there were many difficulties but we were able to overcome them like this. We are now able to go fishing with everyone like this because I was able to take back my dad and mom back from Rizevim's grasp.

———Then another heartwarming scenery appears within my vision,

Le Fay is acting shocked at the fishing rod.

“Onii-sama, I-I don’t think I can attach the bait onto the hook.”

“It can’t be helped then. I will do it for you. But remember that a witch shouldn’t be afraid of an insect, okay?”

Arthur responds to Le Fay as he made a brotherly smile to her, who is afraid of the insect which will act as bait.

Being able to see such a thing is possible only thanks to this trip. I really need to thank my dad.

While such heartwarming thing was happening, Bikou is———

“Hehehe, well, going fishing in such a big group isn’t that bad. Oi, why don’t you dive into the sea and catch us some fish as well?”

“……”

He taunts Fenrir and then———

“Ouuuuuuuuuuuuch! You bit me you damn wolfffffff! Your fangs aren’t a simple joke dammit!”

He got himself bitten remarkably.

Perhaps slapping Fenrir on his head brought this result.

“Tosuka, that’s the sea.”

“Woah, it’s all water!”

I watch over Kiba and Tosuka-san that are enjoying the sea peacefully and then proceed to go around the island to find my fishing spot. I haven’t done fishing since my survival training so it’s been a long time.

……I’ll have myself enjoy fishing which I have forgotten for a long time.

———And the surprising person who walks besides me is,

“I’ll tag along with you for today.”

Vali is coming with me! I really am surprised!

And like this a strange fishing competition between Vali and I began.

Vali and I started to fish at the seashore located in the opposite direction from the base site mom made.

“Oh, looks like you caught your first one.”

Vali who is fishing just a bit away from me got his first hit.

Vali then says.

“Azazel took me fishing quite often. Well, it sure did become handy during camp.”

“I see. Azazel-sensei did mention about his fishing experience.”

“……”

“……”

A silent time follows right after our discussion. We try to find the right time to communicate while fishing.

Few minutes later the one who speaks first is Vali.

“It’s almost time for your High-class Devil promotion ceremony huh.”

“Yeah, it’s the day after tomorrow.”

Yeah,my High-class promotion day is coming up soon. I would never have imagined it would happen this soon when they told me about this news…… I can’t help but think the higher-ups wanted to get this over and done with right away.

They may want to use me soon as they promote me or they may want to send me to do another task. Or maybe both. There’s no way to find out their intentions.

Well, I heard that the higher-ups lost their place soon as the cheating scandal in the Rating Game was revealed. Ajuka Beelzebub-sama also prosecuted their mistakes strongly and has been capturing them and revealing the crimes they committed. There are many people with authority that lost their place and were forced to resign their post than we all imagined due to this incident. So there’s no doubt this will greatly affect the political world, the business community, the human world, and many other departments.

Though there have been certain solutions prepared already to minimise the impact it will cause. So they have assigned even Reincarnated Devils that have potential and are trustworthy from each specialist to each department and left them in charge, giving them free rein in how they will operate and work.

Those who had the ability in specific department but couldn’t join there due to the geezers from the old Devil’s era can finally release their true potential……huh.

The Reincarnated Devils that were gifted with ability but couldn’t work in the department they excel in due to the politics. The ones who listed their names up and recorded them on the lists were the Four Great Satans.

They had been checking for dozens to hundreds of years in order to have them work when a big opportunity were to arise and now those Reincarnated Devils were left in charge at specific departments.

……The Underworld is going to change. No, it needs to change.

———If we are the ones that are able to change it then I can’t ask for an honorary task more than this.

……And my promotion to a High-class Devil is going to be the first step to reach that goal.

I then say it to Vali.

“I’m going to take a day off from school for the promotion ceremony. It can’t be helped since that’s the only day which suits everyone. ……Well, I’m actually really nervous. They are saying that many people will come and there will also be television cameras. I still can’t believe this is happening.”

My promotion to a High-class Devil is being announced even outside of the Underworld so even the other forces knows about it. I hear that many requests for news coverage are being sent to the Gremory castle every day from all the television studios of the Underworld.

They said that a High-class Devil promotion has never been so anticipated as this so it feels it’s not happening in this world where I can’t seem to sense the feel of reality at this.

But Vali says it to me with a serious face.

“This is only natural to happen. You are the hero who saved the Underworld several times already. It isn’t strange for not just the Underworld but also for the other forces to pay attention to you. There’s nothing to be nervous about since the ceremony will end in the blink of an eye. And then they will hand you something which will look like this.”

Saying that, Vali puts his rod down and approaches me. He takes out a document which has been rolled like a scroll from his pocket and passes it to me.

When I spread open the highly decorated parchment in suspicion———I find hard looking Devil’s symbols written on it and my eyes get wide open at this single phrase. This is what it says.

———We shall appoint you, Vali Lucifer, as an Ultimate-class Devil.

———!?

I’m so surprised that a sound didn’t come out from my throat and then I look at Vali. He has his usual cool atmosphere, but……

Seriously!? W-When on earth did this guy become an Ultimate-class!?

“O-Oi, for real!?”

I can’t help but say simply that in shock!

Vali then explains with a bitter smile.

“I did decline it once but they told me that this was Azazel’s wish. They also said it will come with many kinds of authorities with it if I am to be active in the Underworld. Well, I simply received this in secret though. ……Fu, even I can’t grasp Ajuka Beelzebub’s intentions.”

W-Well, if this guy is going to become active as a Devil then getting the position of a Ultimate-class Devil won’t be strange at all……

“Hah.”

I find it so amusing that I blurted in laughter like that.

……Ah, man. How should I put it? There was a guy right beside me who had just become a Ultimate-class Devil immediately while I was thinking so hard about becoming a High-class Devil and he even said that the “the ceremony will end in the blink of an eye”…… That’s why I found it funny and started laughing.

Vali then says.

“You can’t believe it right? Neither can I. That’s how it is. And in your case it’s a special circumstance. It’s a promotion happening when it hasn’t even been a year since you became a Devil. Though it’s also true that so many abnormal situations fell on you consecutively. Let’s go through a brief explanation.”

———Then Vali starts to point out all of the incidents that happened around me in the last year.

“Hyoudou Issei became a Devil last spring. He was dragged into a battle against the Fallen Angels immediately after and experienced the Rating Game within one year. Then he faced the incident involving the possession of Excalibur without a moment to spare, an incident during which he met not only one of the leaders of the Fallen Angels but even their Governor. He witnessed the signing of the Alliance of the Three Great Powers up close and even survived the experience of Juggernaut Drive. He was attacked by the Evil God Loki and Fenrir when not even 6 months had passed since when he was reincarnated into a Devil. He fought the man who wields the strongest Longinus during his school field trip. He conquered the Rating Game of the Underworld’s Youth and then was promoted a Mid-class Devil. In the decisive battle against the Hero-faction———he went through a life and death experience during the monster crisis and was resurrected by the power of Ophis and Great Red,an unpredictable happening. He then proceeded to defeat the Jabberwocky and Cao Cao in that flow. It hasn’t even been a year since all of this accomplishment. Terrifying indeed. It has been full of events which can only make you laugh in amazement. Then it was the battle against Qlippoth. He received an assault from the Evil Dragon Grendel and witnessed the destruction of the country of Vampires up close. He was there during the hijack of Agreas and when the year was about to end he was present during Qlippoth’s assault of Heaven. He accepted the challenge from the Church’s swordsman as soon as the new year began…… And finally he was there during the final battle against Rizevim to beat him down and then defeated Apophis, and now he is still standing right here.”

By listening to Vali’s long explanation……I came to realise how the past year had been packed with action. What my comrades, Vali, and I experienced in the past one year was definitely out of the ordinary.

Vali then says.

“You probably wouldn’t find any other example in where this many history changing events occurred in just one year. Everyone including you, your comrades, and myself are living in an incredible era. For that reason, I could say that it would only be natural for our ratings to keep on going up since we survived this far. That’s why you are getting a promotion……though I wouldn’t be surprised if you are bewildered to the point where your mind can’t keep up with becoming a High-class Devil since you have barely experienced your time as a Low-class Devil and Mid-class Devil.”

……Yeah, I'm going to become a High-class Devil when it hasn't even been a year since I was both a Low-class and Mid-class Devil combined and that's the reason why I'm feeling perplexed.

In the end I haven't done anything like a Mid-class Devil would usually do and I even question myself if I actually fulfilled my role as a Low-class Devil properly. ……But since I'm being promoted to a High-class Devil due to the reviews of others, then it must mean that I'm doing well from other people's perspective. Well, that's what I would like to believe.

But how should I put it…… I'm laughing a bit due to the way Vali is speaking.

Because the way he talks is totally like———

"……The way you said it sounded like it came from Azazel-sensei."

When I say that Vali smiles.

"……Is that so."

After that there's another moment of silence.

" "By the way." "

Vali and my words overlaps.

"……You go first."

Vali asks without hesitation when I urge him.

"———You are going to participate right?"

"The Rating Game tournament? ……Hmm, who knows. You are obviously going to ——"

"I'm participating. Even if you aren't that is. This is a perfect opportunity. After all, there are several God-class participants that have already registered. Being able to challenge a God officially without causing trouble to anyone. There won't be a chance like this again. I will be forming a team while having those guys the first Sun Wukong told me to look after."

Yes, the participants' standards for the World Tournament has a large range so even a God can participate. Though it seems like it has a stronger festival vibe to it, therefore the rules have changed quite a bit compared to the usual Rating Game.

First of all, the maximum number of people in a team is 16. The team would be formed with the [King], the [Queen], two of each [Rook], [Bishop], [Knight], and eight [Pawns]. This is the same as usual but from here it's different. If you register yourself as [King] then your team members don't need to be part of your peerage. And they don't have to be a Devil either. To put it simple its fine as long as you don't double register.

If a Devil registers himself as a [King] it will be fine for an Angel to be in his team and even a human is fine. You can actually form your team to your liking.

Also, even if there is someone who reincarnated into a Devil by the use of a [Bishop]

piece he can still be registered under other chess pieces. This is a big change. So it means that Asia who is a [Bishop] can register as a [Knight] in the tournament for example.

Well, I won't want to have Asia-chan stand in the frontline anyways.

Due to these changes there are many people from each forces that showed interest in participating. And there are God-class among them.

For Vali, who is seeking to fight Gods, there won't be a tournament he will crave for more than this. And he can fight them head on without having to worry for the consequences.

Vali himself is explaining in joy.

"……I would be lying if I say that I'm not hyped, right?"

It came to my mind as I look at this guy who seems to be having fun.

The ones that made the base for the Rating Game World Tournament are Azazel-sensei, Sirzechs-sama, and such since they had been preparing for it behind the scene.

……Maybe Azazel-sensei prepared a stage for Vali to fight the Gods without having him become a criminal. I even start to think as such.

Vali then says it straight to me.

"And if I can fight your team in the tournament then there's nothing more I can ask for. I'm guessing others such as Cao Cao, Sairaorg Bael, and Dulio Gesualdo are thinking the same. I even hear that gentle Ikuse Tobio is planning to register as a [King]."

……I will be able to fight Vali, Cao Cao, Sairaorg-san, Dulio, Ikuse in a Rating Game ———

But then Vali also says this in a calm manner.

"……Even so, I'm sure you have your own circumstances. Your body doesn't belong to only you now."

……I start to become deeply moved at Vali who is able to think about other people's circumstances.

"You sure did change. A bit ago you would have told me to 'participate', right?"

Vali……really changed. Especially lately where he has become calmer…… It feels like his 'stay away' aura disappeared.

Vali simply tilts his head.

"……Did I? ……I guess I did. But you yourself have changed since I first met you. The side of you where you are honest about your sexual desire hasn't changed ———but the eyes you have right now are telling me that you want something besides women."

Vali who is smiling gets another hit with his fishing rod. Vali pulls it right away. He pulled a large fish which may be his biggest catch of the day.

“But it seems like I win for today’s fishing battle. Hyoudou Issei.”

……Looks like the God of Sea is giving his powers to Vali today.

“And also about your ceremony. I also received the invitation. I’ll come if I’m in a mood.”

“Well, thanks for that then.”

I then look up to the sky.

I couldn’t give any answers to Vali’s words then……but it’s also true that all these feelings are building inside me———

To participate in the Rating Game World Tournament with my own team———

Life.2
And thus, to a High-class Devil

Part I

The day after the fishing trip——— it's the day before my High-class Devil promotion ceremony.

I'm currently with a certain person and I am visiting the Kuou academy, which is right now empty.

"Oh, so this is the Kuou academy!"

The one acting really excited while looking at the school building and walking next to me is a girl with a fox's ears——— it's Kunou.

Kunou will be joining Kuoh academy's elementary campus next year. She came from Kyoto because she wanted to see the academy.

———Though the building I'm showing her right now is the high school building, the one all of us attend classes and spend time in. I brought her here because she said she wanted to see the high school building right after the elementary school building was showed to her.

The elementary and the junior school are located on the same campus. A bit further away from them there is the high school campus and the college campus. We are planning to go to the college campus once we take a look around here. The college campus is the place Rias and Akeno-san will be attending very soon. So I may as well check it out too. Though I went there several times already since I had business there.

Kunou is already wearing Kuoh Academy's elementary school uniform. Since it's a different uniform than the high school uniform we wear it definitely has a refreshing taste to it. Well, I entered Kuou academy since the start of high school life so it's natural that I'm not familiar with the uniforms they wear from the kindergarten up to junior high.

From what I heard, Kunou will be moving into the Hyoudou residence from summer. She will be going to the junior school soon as she lives here and gets accustomed in living here.

———Then, when Kunou and I were looking around the school building from the outside we encountered someone familiar.

"Ah, former student council president Sona."

It's the former student president Sona. She's looking up at the school building from the entrance.

She hears our voices and as soon as she sees us she smiles.

"Oh, Ise-kun. How do you do. Oh my, you must be the princess from Kyoto I presume? Now that I remember, I did hear that you will be enrolling into the elementary division from spring."

Kunou bows her head.

“I presume you are Sitri-dono. I am the daughter of Yasaka, who is the leader of the youkais in Kyoto, and Kunou is my name. I’m very pleased to make your acquaintance.”

The former student council president responds to her formal introduction by giving her gratitude.

The former student president then says it as she looks up to the building again.

“I used my days off to take a look around Kuou academy.”

She narrows her eyes as if she was feeling nostalgic.

“……I remember very well when I first came here. It was Rias who brought me to this place.”

I think I heard Rias telling me that before briefly. Apparently she forcefully brought the former student council president to this place when there wasn’t much people around and showed her around.

The former student council president Sona then says.

“I’m sure Rias wanted to show the place she would be attending to me as I am her childhood friend. I can still remember the happy face she had when she was showing me around.”

“Did you enroll here due to Rias’s suggestion?”

This is what the former student president replies to my question.

“Rias didn’t suggest it to me but I surely was enchanted by this place when she was showing me around. It was already decided that I would have been going to high school in the Underworld but after being showed around here I had a change of heart and decided to come to this academy instead. The shocked face my sister showed when I said I wanted to attend high school in the human world was priceless. Definitely something worth remembering even now, ufufu."

After she had a small laugh she looks down and continues with a fragile but yearnly face.

“……Many things happened here in the past three years. Especially when I became a third year student, many events and countless surprises happened.”

……The former student council president had her own kind of three years here. The experiences she had definitely differ from the ones Rias had.

And Leviathan-sama who had been watching her from behind with warm eyes for the past three-years is——— no longer here. She is currently battling Trihexa while inside the Isolation Barrier Field.

From what I heard from Rias the sorrow the former student council president is facing is something that cannot be expressed by mere words.

Sona, the former student council president, usually had been putting up with her sister who wasn’t serious most of the time……but she is definitely worried about

Leviathan-sama more than anyone. That's a given, considering that she loves and respects her more than anyone.

I heard that the fact she cannot show her sister her graduation is the thing that's making her sad the most.

……I am sure Leviathan-sama wanted to see her sister’s graduation,her sister’s shining moment……

———Then a new person appears to the scene.

“Ah, Kaichou. You are here.”

It’s Saji. Looks like he came here to find her.

“Saji, did something happen?”

Saji says it when the former student council president asks him.

“Looks like the matter from before can be dealt with. Tsubaki-san asked me to find you.”

Then the former student council president lifts her glasses from the side and puts on her usual cool demeanor.

“Is that so. Since I had a look around here we should return then. Now then, Ise-kun, congratulation for your promotion. I will be present at the ceremonial hall.”

“T-Thank you.”

The former student president then leaves after saying that.

It seems like Saji also has something to tell me, and he speaks only after his master leaves.

“Oh yeah. Hyoudou, I heard about your promotion to High-class Devil. Congrats! I will definitely become one in the future as well!”

Saji congratulates me with a smile. He starts patting my back.

“Well, I still can’t believe this is happening……but thanks.”

“……By the way, Hyoudou.”

Saji suddenly puts on a serious look and then he asks me.

“Hmm? What’s wrong?”

“What are you going to do about the tournament? We’ll definitely be participating. I will be fighting under Sona-kaichou as her [Pawn]. Are you going to participate under Rias-senpai? Or are you———”

———He must want to ask me if I’m going to be participating as a [King] with my own team.

“……You are asking me the same question like Vali. Well, who knows.”

I give him a vague answer……

Saji then says it as he looks up to the sky.

“———I received an offer to be promoted to a Mid-class Devil.”

“———! Seriously? Congrats!”

I congratulate him from the bottom of my heart.

Wow, that’s good to hear! Well, he did make it this far after getting involved in so many battles! Furthermore, I heard that the biggest achievement the Sitri group made was during the attack of the Great King Bael’s castle orchestrated by the third ranked King of the Rating Game.

I heard that their achievement in that occasion was applauded not only by the Great-King faction but also by the Maou-faction. It’s rare to find an instance in where both factions rate someone positively at the same time.

There are talks about promotions to middle class devil for those in our peerage so it’s not weird Saji will get one too.

Saji then says it shyly.

“……Tsubaki-san also got a talk about the promotion but I’m guessing the battles we fought as part of D×D played the biggest role in this.”

Saji takes a big breath. He then asks me by looking directly at my eyes.

“You……became my aim, an aim which has gone too far ahead of me……but that’s why. I’m not sure whether I can fight you but show me your “game”. Wasn’t going wild in the Rating Game part of our aim too? Then as the peer [Pawn] of yours’, I want to stand on the same stage as you……I really do!”

———!

……I got words of manly passion from Saji as a peer, while being face to face!

Dammit! Vali. And you. I really do wonder why you guys always get to the point without saying it in a vague way!

Then Saji cools himself and apologises.

“……Sorry, I suddenly said something weird. Don’t take it seriously.”

However, he starts banging my chest with his fist.

“……Either way, come join the Tournament no matter what. ———I don’t even think a bit that the match we had in the Underworld was my win at all. That’s why when we clash head on in the tournament I want to continue that fight. Both you and I are a lot stronger than back then.”

Continuing that fight———

During Summer last year I had a bitter experience. A battle I can hardly say I won.

I always thought about settling that score.

I also bang on Saji’s chest with my fist.

“Yeah, when that happens then let’s continue that fight. ———I always thought about beating you on the Rating Game’s battlefield.”

Those words naturally came out of my mouth.

As if I’m participating in the tournament———

Saji confirms that and leaves.

The two of us, Kunou and myself, are then alone. Kunou then starts nodding.

“So many passionate boys sure do come around Ise~!”

Yeah, you are exactly right.

It feels like an important button inside me is about to turn on due to their heat.

Part 2

And the day of my destiny finally came———the day of my High-class promotion ceremony.

I'm visiting the Underworld together with the ORC members, Rias's parents, and my parents. That's right, my parents are finally visiting the Underworld as well. Well, during the War of Evil Dragons they came to the hospital of the Underworld, but that only happened due to an emergency.

This time they are officially here as my relatives, since they will be watching the ceremony that's soon going to take place.

Ignoring my parents, who are speechless at how huge the Gremory castle is, I proceed to do the final confirmation for the ceremony by doing another check with Rias in another room.

……I've been getting lectures and outlines of the ceremony at my house together with Rias and the others since the very day we heard the news about my promotion……but since today is going to be the actual day it's possible that what I have learnt might have disappeared from my head. In order to not embarrass myself, I'm practicing in the ceremonial hall of the Gremory castle and I am reconfirming the whole procedures of the ceremony with Rias.

Rias stands in front of the altar of the ceremonial hall and teaches me.

"———Maou-sama will read the certificate he will give to you. You will need to reply to him the way I taught you. Next I will put on the crown on your head. This is the ritual where someone in a peerage is acknowledged as a [King]. And finally you will be moved to the stone where you will register yourself as a [King]. It's okay to touch the stone after Maou-sama's words. The ritual is pretty much over once you get to this point. Right? Simple, isn't it?"

That's what Rias says! I heard that so many people including the media will be coming to the ceremonial hall…… So I can't be allowed to show a pathetic side of me!

"Ugh, I'm so nervous."

I'm already dressed up in my formal wear. Likewise, Rias who will be appearing in the ritual is wearing her crimson dress. People will pay attention to us even on our way there so wearing formal clothing is essential. Even those in our peerage, my comrades, are wearing formal clothing as well. It's something proper which won't look strange from anyone's perspective.

Well, Rias and I need to wear another formal dress for the ritual once we get there. So this isn't our main dress.

Now that I think about it, I haven't seen Grayfia-san since we got here.

Grayfia-san is the only one who remained in this world from her peerage. Each of the Maou-sama left their [Queen] behind after thinking about the future of the

Underworld and hence Grayfia-san remained here.

……I heard that she's been doing her duty as a maid as usual but I haven't seen her today. Except, Rias is really worried about her.

[……I'm worried about Onee-sama.]

———As such, Rias has been speaking out her thoughts every day since that to me.

I haven't seen Grayfia-san since then. But Rias, who has seen her, said that Grayfia-san hasn't changed and is acting as usual even though Sirzechs-sama went to that side……

I witnessed how Grayfia-san was holding onto Sirzechs-sama in tears just before he left. It's natural that she was in that much shock. That is why I'm more worried after I heard she is acting in a calm behaviour like usual……

She may be hiding her emotions……but Rias who has been cared by her since she was a child is really worried about her.

……I hope she doesn't faint afterwards due to anxiety……

"Rias-sama, Waka-sama, it is time."

———The attendant informs us. It's finally time!

We will be getting on the train from the castle town's station of the Gremory castle and head to the capital city, Lilith. We are under a strict guard while we are on the train. Obviously. The place we are heading to is packed with people. There are many Devils consisting of civillians and those working in news broadcast team.

"Hyoudou Issei-san, please tell us how you are feeling right now!"

"Will you be participating in the World Rating Game Tournament!? Sir Sairaorg Bael and Lady Sona Sitri that are the same youth as you have declared their intent on ———"

There are countless flashes from the cameras. A countless number of questions is being asked at me from the media, but I ignored them. I was ordered to not say anything beforehand so what I have in my mind now is getting inside the train.

And I finally sit on the seat inside the train. The train starts moving before long. I'm finally able to take a break. ……Aaaaaah, this is so tiring. The fatigue already struck me when I haven't even gone through the ritual yet…… I-I never would have imagined that everyone is putting so much attention on me…… Well, I was told about this beforehand but it is more than I imagined…… I'm told that there is a party right after the ritual and then I will finally be able to take my formal clothes off. So it means that I won't be able to escape for the whole day.

Just after a while since the train moved. Ravel suddenly points to the scenery outside.

There is a huge dome-type stadium.

"That stadium is going to be used as one of the arenas for the upcoming World Tournament from what I heard."

I also look at the stadium. It’s huge. It’s way bigger than the Tokyo Dome. Well, the Rating Game is played in a large battlefield after all. It’s obviously better for it to be huge.

“Aren’t the venues for the World Tournament going to be provided mostly from the Devil's and the Fallen Angel’s territories?”

That’s what I said.

From what I heard the Underworld, more specifically the Devil’s side, will be providing the most venues for the World Tournament since the Rating Game originated from here. And the Fallen Angels will be aiding the Devil’s side. I did hear from Azazel-sensei before that there are territories still available within the Fallen Angel’s side and that they are promoting a holiday house to the VIPs of each forces.

I’m guessing that they have used their available territories to prepare the stadium.

Rias then says.

“All of the other mythologies in the world are still worn from the attack by the Trihexa which happened recently. That is why the Underworld which received the least damage offered the most stadiums.”

Ravel continues after her.

“Rating Games originated from the Underworld hence the reason why it was decided the majority of the matches for the first World Tournament would be held here.”

The ones continuing this discussion are Rias’s parents who are on the train with us.

This is what Rias’s father says.

“Even so, most of the organizing committee of the game in our world isn’t taking part in this upcoming world tournament. I heard they will be organising the tournament with excellent staff led by Ajuka-dono.”

“Am I right to presume this has to do with how the cheating scandal was revealed?”

Rias’s dad nods to my question and raises his finger.

“That is obviously part of that but there’s also one more reason. It appears that each force has shown interest in taking in the Rating Game as an entertainment so there’s also the fact that those staff members from each factions would be taught the procedure of Rating Game.”

Now I get it. I heard about the topics relating to the Rating Games turning into worldwide entertainment but it seems like they are going to teach those helping the staff the content of the Rating Games through this tournament at once. Well, if the popularity of the game increases in each forces then the Rating Game played between different forces will definitely get heated up.

Rias’s dad explains further.

“Once the Rating Game attains worldwide relevance, so that it becomes possible to transfer and exchange pieces between the team of all forces then the game will get heated up even more.”

“So it means the Rating Game won’t be just for the Devils in the future.”

Words slips from my mouth.

……The Angels will be playing the Rating Game in the future. It will also become popular in the Norse mythology world and even the Japanese youkais may do it in our homeland. The Rating Game won’t just be for the Devils but for everyone. Yeah, I definitely want to see that happen.

Rias says it while looking out the window.

“…… Diehauser Belial-sama would have been thrilled if he were to know this.”

……

Everyone becomes speechless at her words.

……Emperor Belial committed a crime while carrying complicated thoughts. People say that he loved the Rating Game more than anyone. He craved for someone who would defeat him. We may have found someone who could defeat him as the internationalisation of the Rating Game turns into reality. However, he’s currently inside a cell. For the Champion to be absent when the revolutionary Rating Game is about to start…… It’s a shame.

……I also wanted to defeat him head on. I was no match for him at all in Agreas. But the next time it will be different……!

———I also want to challenge and defeat the Champion!

……But in Rias’s team? Or———

I shake my head after thinking too much about it and try my best to clear my mind. The only thing I need to think about now is to complete the ritual safely.

I can think about the Champion another time.

———Then dad and mom, who are acting really stiff and sitting on their seats, appear within my sights.

“……By the way, dad, mom. Both of you are acting really nervous……so are you two okay?”

Dad answers with a trembling voice.

“Y-Yeah, o-of course I’m okay! Right, honey?”

“Y-Yes, of course we are! It’s not like we are nervous for coming to a place we never have been before or because we are feeling excited about attending the event which will be our son’s shining moment!”

……These two really are acting like people from the countryside who had just come to the city! Man, this is embarrassing since they are acting this way in front of Rias’s parents! I can’t stand to watch them!

Seeing my parents, Rias’s dad speaks to them gently to make them feel relaxed.

“Please don’t be nervous. The only thing we ask you to do is sit on the seats as his

relatives in the ceremonial hall.”

Rias’s mother continues after him with a cheerful expression.

“That’s right. You simply need to watch over your son with warm eyes. The only ones that will be called out to the stage are Ise-san who is the star of tonight’s ritual and Rias who is his [King].”

“……N-Now you are making me feel nervous.”

I mutter as such. I’m the star of today’s event! And the ritual is about to begin in few hours! Aaaaaaaaaaaah, I’m going to have a ritual while in front of so many media! This is going to be broadcasted not just in the Underworld but also by the other force’s television right? I’m beyond nervous and it feels like my heart is about to explode and kill me!

Rias smiles at me who am putting on a stiff look.

“You already experienced many events far exceeding this one so you need to get used to things like this, okay? You have done something more remarkable such as beating Loki and Rizevim.”

T-That’s because that was a battle! It’s something totally different to formal rituals like this!

Even my comrades are chuckling at seeing how stiff I am.

Geez! You guys sure have it easy since all of you simply need to sit on the seats as my relatives!

And my parents and Rias’s parents are having fun talking between them.

Rias’s father takes out a milk container and starts to talk passionately.

“By the way. We made something like this. It’s called the “Oppai Dragon’s milk” and we made it by using a special manufacturing method to the milk we gathered from the cows in the Gremory territory and———”

My parents are also drawn into his explanation and are listening while nodding.

“Oh my, so this is one of the products based on our son———”

“Woah, it goes down my throat so smoothly and there’s such a sweet taste in it! This will be popular among both children and elderly———”

“We are planning to make it as a merchandise by summer. And there will definitely be an author’s copyright paid to your son———”

My parents are no longer feeling nervous and instead have their attention on Rias’s father who is talking.

……Well, it will be fine with me being the only one feeling nervous.

Like this, the train arrives at the Maou’s territory———

Part 3

We arrive to the station at the Maou's territory. We then get on to several limousines to head to the ceremonial hall under strict surveillance. There are several security cars surrounding the limousines…… Just how much money and people are they employing for my promotion…… This is such an honour.

We arrive to the ceremonial hall in no time. We go inside the building and prepared for the ceremony. The person in charge of taking care of me leads me to a room in where I change into my formal wear which has been custom-made for ritual purposes.

I fix my hair back and they put on make-up on my face. Since I've come this far I'll just let the person taking care of me do his job. I don't grumble nor complain and just go with the flow.

After I'm done getting ready I am told to wait in the waiting room. Rias who is in ritual dress appears immediately.

———She's beautiful!

Rias becomes super beautiful with makeup on! She has her hair tied up and her dress is shiny too! The lipstick they applied on her lips makes her look more mature.

"Do I look weird?"

Maybe she doubted the way I looked at her. So she starts looking at how she's dressed.

"Nope. You look gorgeous!"

I answer her by giving her a thumbs-up.

It's time. Rias and I head to the entrance of the ceremonial hall. I stand behind Rias and I have to follow behind her once the entrance opens.

There are guards standing on the sides of the double door. Around us there are soldiers working as security and other staff people.

……Ugh, I'm getting even more nervous! I wonder if I can do this. I'm getting worried but Rias turns around and smiles at me.

"It will be fine. This is the ceremony to congratulate you. So show it to everyone. ———The result of what you achieved with all the experience you gained by going forward in the past one year."

———!

……The result of the one year I had experienced……

In such situation my High-class promotion ceremony finally begins. Then the drum rolls. The double door opens quietly while the music chosen for my entrance is played.

What appears in the spacious view in front of me are———the higher-ups in formal dresses lined up in the splendid and gorgeous ceremonial hall. They are looking at me as they give me a round of applause.

Rias walks forward. I follow behind her in a way so I make sure I am not left behind while keeping a speed which won't make me look weird.

I take a quick glimpse around and I see the ORC members.It appears the Sitri group and Sairaorg-san are also here. Ah, I can see Vali and his comrades in the corner of the hall near a pillar.

As we head to the altar, I start to get all the flashbacks of the last year as Rias mentioned.

———I am Rias Gremory. I am a Devil. And I am your Master. Nice to meet you, Hyoudou Issei-kun. Can I call you Ise?

All my meetings started from my death.

———Ahahahaha! It's impossible! Because she died! That girl is dead, you know? It's not the matter of whether you protect her or not. You couldn't protect her! You couldn't protect her back at evening and even now! You really are a weird boy! It's so amusing!

Raynare…… Can you see how I have become a High-class Devil? I won't let anyone die again.

———Fire bird and Fenghuang! The hell fire of our clan that was praised as being that of a Phoenix! Taste it with your own body and turn into ashes!

It was hot. Raiser, your fire was hot back then and also during our rematch.

———No. I'm living so I can seek my revenge. Holy-sword Excalibur. Destroying that is the reason why I am living.

Heh, Kiba. There was a time when you said that. Take care of Tosuka-san.

———Do you think a world without God is wrong? Do you think a world without God would decay? I am sorry to say so, but that isn't the case. Both you and I are healthily living like this. ———The world moves on even without a God.

You were right, Azazel-sensei. We were able to manage it somehow even without God's presence.

———Ise-san, I love you. I will always stay beside you.

I love you too, Asia. Let's stay together forever.

———It means that there are those who will find pain in what you call peace.

Vali. That's what you said before. But maybe the peace you imagine is the same as mine now.

———Hyoudou Issei! I won't lose! There is a dream I need to fulfill!

Sairaorg-san, those exchanges of fists I had with you is my pride.

———……Friend? What's the benefit if I become that?

You benefited from it, didn't you, Ophis?

———I want to confirm. ———Hyoudou Issei. What are you?

I am just me, Cao Cao. I will become a High-class Devil while being myself.

———I also have the ambition of wanting to stir up the heat with you as well!

Of course, Ravel. I'm a pathetic guy but I really need you so I can fulfill my ambition.

———Rias-buchou, Akeno-san, Koneko-chan, Yuuto-senpai, Asia-senpai, Xenovia-senpai, Irina-senpai, Ravel-san, Rossweisse-san, Azazel-sensei, and the Sekiryuutei —Ise-senpai. After all, all of you are my precious comrades———

Whether you are Gya-suke or Balor, you are my important junior and a strong Gremory boy.

———Hey, Ise-kun. If I ever get used by them……will you please kill me?

Rossweisse-san, I will never let you say such thing ever again.

————An angel's kiss! It was because the scene was so beautiful. People would naturally want to kiss like this.

Seriously, thanks to you it became an awesome Christmas. It was a kiss I could never forget.

———Everyone, make this become a happy Kuoh Academy. No, I'll do it. So, I'd like everyone to please take care of me.

I'm looking forward to it, Xenovia-kaichou! I will become your help anytime.

———Even if he was reincarnated and his appearance has changed, he's still my child, isn't that right?

……Of course I am. I am the son of dad and mom. That will never change even if it's ten-thousand years later.

———……Azazel said to you that you were his last, and his best student……

……

……

……Why aren't you here? ———Sensei, I wanted to show you this scene,my shining moment.

I remembered all these events as I walked to the altar———and there's this feeling building inside me.

But I need to hold back my tears. I am not allowed to cry yet. The real deal will start from here.

Just one year———. But one year filled with so many events———.

A year like this. I will most likely never experience something like that ever again.

I have survived a harsh, yet fun, year. I stand in front of the altar while having pride in what I have gone through———.

That instant, I receive words of congratulation from partner.

[Congratulation, partner. Good work on coming this far. You reached Balance Breaker, you survived Juggernaut Drive, and you showed me all a new side of being the Sekiryuutei. Let's get along from now on as well, the one who is a Devil and Dragon, the one who has a blazing truth within him. ———"Sekiryuutei of the Issei (Blazing Truth)".]

Yeah, thanks, Ddraig. Because you were by my side I was able to fight. Take care of me from now on as well, the Emperor of the Red Dragons, Y Ddraig Goch!

And the one who awaits me at the altar is Ajuka Beelzebub-sama,who is in his awesome looking Maou outfit. ……Just how happy I would have been if Sirzechs-sama was next to him.

"I have been waiting for this. ———From here on you will become one fine High-class Devil."

Under Maou-sama's guidance who gave me such words the ritual finally begins.

"———And so, the next will be———"

I sit on the chair beside the altar with Rias and follow the guidance of the host of this ceremony.

One of the best opera singers offered to sing for this ceremony and is about to start her performance. She stands in front of the microphone which is set on the altar and then she starts to sing.

[Theeere is a Ooooooppai-loving Dragon living in the edge of a certain countrrrrrry~.]

———What started with her beautiful voice was the Oppai Dragon's song!

[Draaaaaagon, Draaaaaagon, Opaiiiiii Dragon~.]

I don't know how I'm supposed to feel with that song despite her beautiful voice!

Even my comrades in the ceremonial hall don't know how to react so they are putting on a troubled expression instead!

But for some reason Rias's dad has a deeply moved expression! He looks like he's so moved that he's thinking it was a terrific idea to call her!

Rias has a red face and is twitching one of her eyebrows! Ah, this pretty much guarantees Rias's dad getting an earful of lectures from his daughter after this.

After the song, the ritual finally phases into the main part. Rias and I stand in front of the altar and the first thing that will happen is the certificate being delivered. Maou Ajuka Beelzebub-sama starts to read what's written on the certificate.

"———For those reasons, I hereby proclaim you, the servant of Rias Gremory, Hyoudou Issei, as a High-class Devil."

I get on my knee and receive the certificate gratefully. Now, here is my line.

“It will be my honour.”

———I reply in a complicated manner.

I heard there are those who uses exaggerated words or really long lines in this situation. But I only gave a plain answer since I was told that the simpler the reply the better. Well, exaggerated words would be impossible for an high school student like me!

I get up once to show my certificate in front of the crowd so they can have a clear look at it. Wow, there’s a sudden round of applause and many camera flashes!

———I then hand the certificate to the person helping me. Next is the ritual where Rias, who is my master, puts on a crown on my head.

Rias and I stand in front of the altar and face each other. I then get on my knee. Rias receives the crown from the person in charge. And then she———puts on the crown on my head. It appears to be a real crown so I can feel the heavy weight.

Then there is another round of applause. Alright, with this the ritual for the crowning is over.

For the last part the Maou Beelzebub-sama appears on the altar once again and raises his hand. Then a stone monument which is shining in black colour comes falling from above our heads. The stone monument floats in the air.

……So this is the monument which is essential for registering a High-class Devil that I heard about. I heard that by touching this, the requirement as a High-class Devil ——— and a [King] is completed.

“Now, the new [King], Hyoudou Issei. Stand in front of the monument———”

Maou-sama urges me.

I take a step forward while enveloping my left hand with my aura ——— and then touch the monument.

Heartbeat! That instant, my heart made a loud beat! Now I get it. This monument is made from the same material as the Evil Pieces.

The monument then shines red ———no, it shines crimson, and then shows my hand print for an instant. And then it returns to the normal monument.

……I’m guessing the……registration is done with this then?

I then receive a small box from Maou-sama. When I open it I found ——— 15 Evil Pieces inside!

……T-These are the Evil Pieces that are solely for me! What I craved for so long is finally in my hands……!

As such, the ritual is done with the most crucial part of the ceremony. What comes after this is the words of congratulation from the guest which were read by the host of the ceremony.

Since Rias and I are done with our role, we sit on the chairs reserved for us and feel

a bit relieved.

After all the ceremony was over Rias and I left the stage. I was overwhelmed when everyone started clapping as we left!

I return to my changing room. I start to relax after I drank some water.

The one who spoke to me first after finishing my ritual is ——— my master, Rias.

“Congratulation, Ise.”

“Thank you! Though I wonder if I did it right.”

“You sure did. You were magnificent.”

I’m happy when Rias said I was magnificent!

———And it seems like everyone is leaving the stage. So my comrades are coming to my room one after another.

My dad and mom are emotional while the others are congratulating me.

“I don’t know what was going on in there but it sure does make me emotional when I saw Ise under the spotlight! Right, honey!?”

“You are right, darling. It sure did make me emotional since it seemed like our son has gained a higher social status than his father! By the way, what kind of privilege does High-class Devil have? I wonder if you get a pay rise?”

Dad grabs me by my shoulder and says this.

“Ise! If you become a person who is above me than why don’t you buy us a ticket for a holiday with your bonus!? One of my dreams was to be given a present from our son so that me and your mother can go on a tour!”

“The hot natural bath at Kusatsu sure would be nice.”

O-Onsen tour huh. I-If it’s just that then I’m sure I can fulfill their wish right away, I think.

More importantly, am I above my dad now? We live in a completely different working field so I can’t make any judgment.

Rias then tells my parents.

“It’s far from it. With Ise’s current status then getting a world tour isn’t even a dream.”

“ “A W-W-W-World touuuuuur~!!?” ”

Both of them are shocked at Rias’s words and their bodies are shaking.

……The grade of the tour raised tenfolds! From Kumatsu to a world tour……! I guess I have to work hard to work on my parent-and-son relationship!

———Then this time two unexpected people appear in my room.

“Hyoudou Issei! So you are here.”

It’s Raiser! So he was at the hall!

“Raiser-san! You came!”

When I said that, Raiser replies as he blushes.

“Hmph, appearing to the place where I am invited to is the way I live. Besides, I’m here as an escort today.”

“As an escort?”

I become curious but the person who is entering the changing room ——— a familiar lady.

“Hyoudou Issei-san, how do you do? You have become a High-class Devil so I wanted to formally give you my words of congratulation.”

Ravel’s mom! The wife of the current Head of the House of Phoenix!

“O-Oh my, if this isn’t Ravel’s mother! It really has been awhile! And thank you!”

I respond by bowing my head! I never expected Ravel’s mom would come! I can’t feel grateful enough!

Even Ravel is shocked at this.

“O-Okaa-sama! You came!?”

“Yes, I came here while bringing Raiser with me. We were standing on the side of the hall.”

Ah, that’s why I couldn’t see them.

Ravel’s mom then moves into another topic to get to the main point.

“Now then, Hyoudou Issei-san. Do you remember the promise we made earlier?”

“Umm……”

Ravel’s mom chuckles when she sees me who's totally clueless at what’s she’s talking about.

“The trade. Regarding Ravel who is both my daughter and servant. I definitely am sure I asked you for a trade once you would become a High-class Devil.”

“Ah! Yes we certainly did. I am positive we made such promise……I think.”

We had such a discussion over the telecommunication magic-circle when it was decided that Ravel would be staying at the Hyoudou residence……I think! My memory is vague since many things happened.

Ravel’s mom makes a proposal as if she finds it's the right time to say it.

“Then let us begin our trade right away. Did you know that it’s better to do these things soon as possible? It’s also hard for me to make time so I don’t know when is the next time I can meet you.”

I can only be shocked at the suggestion of doing the trade. But here is even more surprise! Rias also gets involved!

“Yes, this certainly is the right time. ———Then I shall do a trade as well. Asia and Xenovia that is.”

[———!?]

All of us are shocked at this! Of course! A sudden trade for Ravel was shocking enough! But now it’s also for Asia and Xenovia!

Rias then says it to the two of them.

“Asia, Xenovia. I had been saying it since last year but you do remember about our discussion regarding the trade once Ise would become a High-class Devil right?”

“Y-Yes!”

“Of course.”

Asia and Xenovia respond. Yeah, rather than about the trade the two of them certainly did declare that they will follow me once I become a High-class Devil.

Though that means that the trade with Rias is the requirement…… This topic is something which had been discussed between us since last year.

However. When it’s about to turn into reality, Asia and I can only be confused. Then Rias starts to draw what looks like to be a trading-purpose magic-circle with Ravel’s mom on the floor.

“Then let’s get started.”

Asia then speaks in a perplexed manner as the preparation of the trade is on progress.

“B-But……”

Rias stops her procedure for once. She then hugs Asia.

She speaks to Asia kindly as if she’s trying to calm her.

“You don’t need to worry about it. It’s not like we will be living apart from each other. And the feelings between us aren’t something which will change just with a trade, is it?”

“Y-Yes! Of course! The gratitude and respect I have for Rias-oneesama will never change!”

Rias says it fondly as she pats Asia’s head.

“Likewise for me, Asia. Then nothing will change even after you have become Ise’s servant. Except, please support Ise while being under him. There are things which can only be done by you. And that is something which is impossible for me. It’s a wonderful task which is only capable by you, okay?”

Rias brings Xenovia towards her and hugs her along with Asia.

“I ask the same for you too, Xenovia. Please become Ise’s sword.”

Xenovia responds to her hug with a peaceful expression.

“Yeah, roger that. Former Buchou, Rias. Thank you……thank you very much for looking after me! Uuugh~!”

Xenovia suddenly cries. She starts to shed many tears.

Rias makes a bitter smile seeing that.

“Hey, don’t start crying. It’s not like our lifestyle is going to change…… Only your [King] will change so nothing else will change you know……?”

That’s right. I’ve become a [King] but it’s not like I will be living separately from Rias right now. I will be living by myself once I become a High-class Devil! That will not happen.

It was a sudden promotion to a High-class Devil so I couldn’t even prepare time to become independent. Well, from here I can gradually prepare to become independent as I look at my career path. It’s just that the order of things changed a bit.

So it’s not like everyone's lifestyle will change suddenly.

Kiba then says.

“Well, in a big way we can still call all of us the “Rias Gremory’s peerage”. As long as Ise-kun doesn’t move out right now then nothing will change visibly.”

Koneko-chan continues after him.

“……Ise-senpai will be summoned as Rias former-buchou’s [Pawn] once she participates in the Underworld’s Rating Game after all.”

Yeah, that’s what it must mean. When Rias participates in the professional Rating Game I simply have to join as her [Pawn].

And so, the ritual for the trade goes on. The magic-circle appears again on the floor of the changing room. Rias, Ravel’s mom, and I stand at the side of the magic-circle. Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel stand at the centre of the magic-circle. Among the Evil-Pieces which I had just received earlier, I am holding onto the unused pieces consisted of two [Bishops] and one [Knight].

Rias and Ravel’s mom close their eyes and increase their aura while putting their hand forward. Then the Devil symbols written on the magic-circle start to circulate.

Then there are changes happening to the girls. What happens first is Asia and Xenovia’s body shining as if they're responding to the shine from Rias’s aura. Then next, my body starts to shine and each of my [Bishop] and [Knight] that I am holding onto shine one after another.

The flow of the aura changes gradually as it bypasses the magic-circle where the Evil Pieces I’m holding onto start to synchro with Rias’s glow. Then this time Asia and Xenovia synchronise with my aura. And at the end Ravel’s mom and Ravel start to glow while my last [Bishop] piece also glows.

Ravel and I synchro through the magic-circle while my [Bishop] piece synchros with Ravel’s mom.

Once this whole ritual ended——— Rias and Ravel's mom stopped releasing their aura and the magic-circle on the floor disappears.

And then Rias picks up each of the [Bishop] and the [Knight] piece which originally belonged to me. Ravel's mom picks up the remaining [Bishop] piece.

Rias then says it with a smile on her face.

"Alright, it's all done now. Asia, Xenovia. From now on you are "Hyoudou Issei's Peerage"."

Oh really!? So this is trading! It was quite simple.

———Then Asia jumps into my arms.

"Ise-san! Ise-san, Ise-san, Ise-san!"

The way how Asia is overjoyed was shocking.

She did keep on saying how she wanted to become a part of my peerage this whole time after all.

I also hug Asia.

"Yeah, Asia! With this one of my promises is fulfilled!"

"I love you! I won't leave you anymore!"

"Hahaha, there wasn't a single time you ever left me."

This time Xenovia puts her arm around my neck.

"I'm also with you! Let's go on a rampage!"

"Just don't overdo it, Xenovia!"

It's terrifying when you go all out! Well, I can also say that's what makes her so reliable!

"Ravel, take care of me from now on too!"

I say that to Ravel who also became my servant.

Ravel acts strong while having tears in her eyes.

"Of course. I will give my all for my [King], Ise-sama, as your manager and as your servant."

Yeah, I will also improve myself to live up to the standard of my manager, Ravel!

Ravel's mom gives a single nod after witnessing this and then says this.

"Then I will entrust my daughter to you for eternity. I will also need to prepare for the ceremonies coming ahead———"

"O-Okaasama! You are rushing it! Please wait till I graduate from College!"

Ravel who covers her mom's mouth in a rush.

But once Ravel's mom makes a single cough she whispers into my ears with a serious expression.

(……I will tell you one thing about my daughter.)

And this is what she whispers to me.

(———Ravel's true nature is the path of supremacy. That path is bound to create grudges in others by governing the world through military force and wisdom. It's like oil and water when compared to you whose true nature is the path of righteousness if you were to govern the world.)

———!

……Ravel's true nature is the path of supremacy? In other words she will create the supreme ruler?

Ravel's mom pokes my chest using her finger and then says this with a meaningful smile.

(If you rely on Ravel then you will certainly fall into the path of supremacy. So I ask you to not make a mistake in how to use her. The reason why I took Ravel from Raiser is because I thought he would mistakenly use her even if he knows about her talent.)

……What is she saying?

Ravel and the path of supremacy…… At this time I can only tilt my head in wonder.

Irina who was watching this whole procedure is putting on a expression as if she made a certain decision.

"……So both Xenovia and Asia went to Ise-kun's side…… Yeah, it's about time I make a decision."

……Irina, wonder if the trade earlier made her think of something.

———Myself who has just attained three servants. Then Raiser asks me.

"So then, Hyoudou Issei. You have become a High-class Devil, something you were craving for. So I presume your aim hasn't changed yet, right?"

Oh, so you are asking me that question! I say it happily with a lecherous face.

"Of course I'm looking forward to the sumptuous feast! Beautiful women and girls! Oppai, oppai, a Harem-King with so many dreams!"

Obviously my main aim hasn't changed. I've been training so hard in order to achieve that and continued to fight strong foes despite almost losing my life.

———But I have gained ambitions other than that within this past one year.

So I reveal them.

"……Well, that's how I started. But now on top of that aim I am thinking how wonderful it would be to live peacefully with my comrades and family. I want to make it that way and I hope it becomes that way."

What I realised while fighting bad guys is how important your daily life is. And furthermore how important peace is.Rather, if you can't live your days peacefully then you can't do lecherous things!

"———Ah, except there is one more thing I need to add."

I put my finger up and make an oath.

"If there are those that will hurt my important people then I will definitely defeat them even if they may be a God."

I declared that to everyone here with determination.

Yeah. I definitely won't forgive those who will hurt my important people or disturb our important peaceful world even if that person might be a God.

———The War of Evil Dragons was an incident which was enough to change my values.

Raiser makes a big smile hearing that.

"You sure have become good at talking. Looks like I can entrust Ravel to you. ——— Then you will be coming right?"

He says this as he puts his arm around my neck.

"The World Tournament. From the House of Phoenix my eldest brother's and my team will be participating. I have determined that there is meaning for me to participate no matter how hard it is for me to win it. Being able to fight God-classes officially is an unthinkable situation which you could never experience."

———!

……Oh man. Even this person has brought up this topic. And this person is also participating. Even if the chances of winning the tournament are slim he believes participating in it has a meaning———

Raiser Phoenix, both your body and soul really has become burning hot…… Just like an immortal bird. I really start to think how fighting you in the past was a great experience.

Raiser says it while messing my hair.

"I believe you will participate as a [King]. No, I am hoping for it. And if I'm able to fight you there…… Burn me up, Sekiryuutei. I will be waiting!"

———Hehe, seriously.

Even this person is asking me. I guess it's unavoidable for those people I will be meeting from now on to ask me the same question.

Raiser and his mom left the changing room after they gave us a farewell after the trade———

It happens when we left the changing once our business there ended and we are on way to the hall where the party will be held.

We are welcoming a guest once again.

It's a boy who looks like a middle-school student with black hair which looks bluish. He has a well structured face.

I thought he was the son of a rich family who had become lost. But the moment our eyes met———

I understand by instinct that the alert level inside me went up to the max right away.

His eyes give me the feeling he is seeing right through me. Fear, menace, and shivers are what I get from him which feels as if he will gain control of both my body and mind…… It wasn't just me. Others (minus my parents) sensed the divinity and the limitless power coming from the boy and instead of being alert all of us can simply shiver.

The boy says this as he makes a small chuckle.

"Hmm……I'm meeting them for the first time but I can see the faces of those I heard from rumours and those I haven't. Still, I need to give my words of congratulation. Congrats on becoming a High-class Devil, Sekiryuutei."

The boy gives me a clap.

The one who appears from behind him are———the Maou Ajuka Beelzebub-sama and another unknown man. He's wearing a native dress, a sari.

It isn't a bottomless divinity as the boy, but the unknown man also has an unbelievable aura of divinity coming from his whole body and is continuing to release a supreme aura. He's a good looking man with long black hair and pale white skin despite having a good build. He also has sharp eyes and after he takes a look at all of us he brings his gaze back to me.

"……Hmm, so this is the "Sekiryuutei of the Issei (Blazing Truth)" that had defeated Loki and Apophis."

Looks like he was observing my spec and it sounds like I have satisfied him.

Rias calls out Beelzebub-sama's name.

"Ajuka-sama."

Beelzebub-sama raises his hand to urge us to "not put our alert on".

"Rias, this person here wanted to meet all of you so even if it was sudden I have brought him here."

Saying that, Beelzebub-sama introduces the boy to us.

"———This person is Shiva-sama."

[———!?]

……Oh my god……!

……The God of Destruction who is in a different league among all the Gods.If you don't include Great Red and Ophis he is said to be the strongest among the whole

forces……!

Everyone here is in total shock (Though my parents are dumbfounded since they don't know what's going on here!)!

……More importantly, he came to my ceremony today!? Just how much attention am I getting today!?

The boy———Shiva, says this as he smiles at us.

"How are all of you doing, D×D……of the Kuou academy side should I say. My name is Shiva, one of the three pillar Gods. I feel that we will be meeting more frequently from now on so I wanted to give you my greetings."

He puts his hand forward……so I shake his hand while feeling frightened.

"T-Thank you for that……"

……I'm shaking hands with the God of Destruction……

———And this time the tall man who looked like his escort speaks to me.

"The promotion to a High-class Devil, allow me to congratulate you as well."

"……Y-You are, umm."

Shiva introduces the man to me.

"He is the young Prince of Asura."

———!

……Hahaha, I'm totally speechless now. This time it's the Prince of Asura!

The Prince of Asura puts his hand forward and introduces himself.

"The name is Mahabali. Nice to meet you."

The Prince of Asura, Mahabali, says it as he shakes my hand.

"Especially you, Hyoudou Issei, I was eager to meet you. Your achievements during the War of Evil Dragons also reached my ears. I also wanted to fight against Trihexa alongside you."

"Y-You are flattering me……"

I can only answer him by forcing a smile on my face! That's because two Gods…… more like two pillars of Gods, but still two pillars of Gods came all the way here just to greet me! I can only get confused at this situation which has far exceeded my expectations!

Shiva seems to be having fun since he is putting his hand under his chin.

"I have heard you were honest about your sexual desire but you don't seem like that at all. A Harem-King is your dream, is it?"

"W-Well, I'm famous for being a lewd! I have already attained moves such as Dress Break which blows off women's clothing and Bilingual which allows me to speak to

their breasts! And now I'm hoping if I can create a new move which allows me to see through women's clothing!"

Why the heck am I explaining such things to the God of Destruction and the Prince of Asura!

And Mahabali is taking my words seriously so he's nodding with a serious face!

Shiva seems to be just having fun.

"Hmm, is that so. Certainly the sexual desires have been the direct source of coming up with those moves. But from looking at you right now it's hard to think you made such moves since I don't sense that much sexual desires coming from you."

Shiva points at my nose and then asks this.

"What are you seeking for right now? Is it women after all? Or is it fame?"

"I, I want both! ……Isn't that it?"

Shiva shakes his head at my words and then says this.

"It's what you are seeking for from the deep of your heart. What is the most thing you desire? Not as a singular but as a whole."

What I desire for which is not singular but as a whole……

I answer him right away.

"……I guess it's peace. I want to live peacefully in a war-free world. I am fighting with all my strength just for that."

Shiva makes a single nod after hearing that. He then looks from the top of my head to the tip of my feet.

"……I see, so that's how it is."

It seems like there is something which convinced him.

"W-What do you mean?"

When I ask——— Shiva puts his palm on my chest.

"Yes, he simply swimmed in that boundary peacefully as he liked without being restrained by anything. Ophis despite what happened in the past is enjoying peace right now, right? If the two beings which could be said as your second parents are seeking for peace then it won't be weird if your true nature changed since you were made by their powers. It seems like you have greatly influenced both Great Red and Ophis but the opposite would also apply. The current you is seeking to live more than anything. ———It means you are putting your all in protecting your peaceful life. If you really want to become a Harem King then you might not be able to advance further if you don't settle your thoughts."

So he's saying that I'm craving for peace more than anyone due to Great Red and Ophis's influence.

……More importantly, this God of Destruction knows where Ophis lives huh. Was it

Beelzebub-sama or Azazel-sensei that told him……

Shiva continues.

“It’s also influenced by the Infinity and the Dream but you are also seeking for peace, right? The infinity-like synergy might be strengthening that greed even further. You could say that this is the price of getting a powerful power and possibility. I’m guessing that deep inside you it’s stopping you from making babies until you achieve the peace you wish for with your own hands. You could say that it’s handcuff made from karma. There is no way a former human can unequip the powers of two God-class Dragons.”

……This feeling is swirling inside me. The mixed feeling I have is actually coming from…… So are you telling me that I can aim to become a Harem King only after achieving peace with my own hands……?

……Is that it, Great Red? Ophis? The Heavenly Dragon that is seeking for peace…… ……I see. That might be it. Both Great Red and Ophis are living so carefreely. They are trying to live in such a way. The two Dragons that are called the strongest wants to enjoy peace. No, they are enjoying peace.

The two Gods of Dragons are like my dad and mom. If they are seeking for peace then it can’t be helped that me,who is their child,is being influenced by them……

Shiva laughs in amusement when he sees me thinking all of this.

“The existence which sounds like a joke since he has the power of two Dragons that surpasses my strength is seeking for peace more than anything else and is aiming to become a Harem King, huh. …….Fufufu, you’ve taken my interest.”

Shiva who talks to Beelzebub-sama.

“Ajuka, you do remember the condition Azazel gave me, right?”

“……The case where we would prepare anything you ask for, I presume?”

Beelzebub-sama asks him.

Shiva nods.

“Yes, that’s it. ———Sekiryuutei.”

“Eh? Ah, yes?”

Shiva then says it directly to my face.

“———How about you come under me?”

[———!?]

Me and my comrades can only be shocked at this!

Shiva then tells Rias.

“Ah, don’t misunderstand me. I’m not telling him to leave your side, Rias Gremory. If a war breaks out from our mythology as the centre of it then how about he comes to my force? ———That’s what I was getting at. Even having his comrades included in

it is fine. If it’s your comrades then they are a promising bunch, right?”

“Shiva-sama! But that is!”

Shiva speaks as he stops Beelzebub-sama’s words with his hand.

“The action of Śakra———Indra, who is increasing his forces in order to defeat me, is something you are aware of, right? He is gathering notable fighters under him in order to challenge me. I’m presuming that day will be unexpectedly soon. There is a high chance he will take action in the upcoming tournament. You do know there is Cao Cao and the first Sun Wukong under him, right? Then it’s natural for me to want some useful and strong pawns under me as well.”

“……Shiva-sama.”

Shiva shrugs his shoulders to Beelzebub-sama.

“”I won’t tell you to leave Rias Gremory’s side. But Indra has already started taking actions as he is already looking at the “next” phase, you know? Then the earlier I give you my offer the better it is.”

This time the man who is escorting him———the Prince of Asura Mahabali, says it to me. I mean why are these guys keep on talking to just me for!?

“Sekiryuutei, we the Asuras have already decided to walk along beside Shiva-sama. If you join our forces then we can’t feel anymore assured. How about it? How about you come under Shiva-sama so you can fight alongside me on the battlefield? Defeating that Indra together with us certainly will be an amusement.”

Suddenly Mahabali is releasing a furious aura from his whole body. At the same time the small objects in this room such as cups and tables start shaking and showing cracks on them.

“I won’t forgive Indra. My father, Vairochana, was killed none other than by Śakra, that Indra, after all……! Varuna-sama who is the current King of Asura is telling me to calm down but this anger of mine is one thing I cannot calm down!”

……His voice and actions are packed with so much intensity and rage. His face is covered in anger.

Shiva reaches his hand out to me.

“———The “Sekiryuutei of the Issei (Blazing Truth), come under my forces. If you are the servant of the Ruin Princess……no, actually you are the Dragon that had far surpassed a Devil. Wouldn’t receiving a protection from the God of Destruction be interesting?”

……This is such a crazy offer. To tell you the truth, it's so out of this world that I can’t keep up with the topic. I know that I can’t recklessly accept his offer. If Azazel-sensei was here he would have interfered into this discussion but he’s no longer here.

———From now on I have to think and answer on my own.

I then ask Shiva.

“……Do you want to have war against Śakra?”

Shiva laughs.

“That won’t be a bad idea. ———Though I have become too bored with a mere war. I would prefer to prepare something more interesting. Well, I have no intention of starting a mudding war after so long.”

He’s saying it in a way as if he is evading to answer seriously.

Shiva also says this.

“Sekiryuutei of the Issei (Blazing Truth). Just remember this. From now on, whether they are friend or foe, those who would appear in front of both you and the Hakuryuukou of the Morning Star will be God-class beings. Both your connections and battles would involve many God-class beings. ———That’s how much feat you two demonstrated. You might be a Dragon that loves women and peace more than anything else. No, you probably are. You have made so much miracles because of that. But you know, I think there is another real reason behind it.”

Shiva narrows his eyes and seems like he’s finding it interesting.

“———You like strong individuals, right? Obviously that would include your comrades but even if they were your enemy, you love to battle the warriors with strong beliefs more than anything. You like to both watch and battle them. The new interest you gained besides women within this last year filled with intense battles is to fight strong men, isn’t it?”

———!

……

……I wonder why. Myself who was seeking for a harem roughly a year ago. About a year has passed since then———

Even though I want to reject Shiva’s words I can’t bring myself to. No, there is a side of me deep inside me which is approving them.

Yeah, along with lecherous thoughts I ——— was enchanted by “strength” and became crazy about it through that battle with Raiser, the Sitri, Sairaorg-san, and many other strong opponents.

I have come to like defeating strong opponents after intense battles just as liking to grope girls’ breasts———.

It appears Shiva took my silence as an approval and is smiling happily.

Shiva starts patting my back.

“It’s regarding the World Rating Game Tournament which I will be sponsoring. I’m planning to name it after one of the heroes of the War of Evil Dragon and call it “Azazel Cup”. He did do all the work behind the scene right before it started. Don’t you think it’s a fitting name?”

———Azazel Cup. That’s the name of the World Rating Game Tournament.

Shiva continues further.

“———The strong men you like so much will also be appearing. Many of those warriors that like you so much. All of those who exchanged fists with you would be participating. Seeing that, are you going to stand on the side line while biting your nails?”

Mahabali also says it straight to me.

“I am also participating. And if you are as well then let’s definitely duel. I understood it today after meeting you. ———With you I can have a fight after which I cannot ask for more.”

Never thought even a God would ask me. Just how many people are seeking for me?

———Then Shiva moves his gaze to the door.

“Don’t you have anything to say? The Assasin-san sent from Śakra.”

———!

Everyone becomes alert at Shiva’s words. There is an assassin sent by Śakra standing behind the door!? I didn’t notice that at all! So you are telling me that the assassin has been eavesdropping on us!?

The one who appears by opening the door is——— Cao Cao! C-Certainly this guy may be an assassin sent from Śakra but I never expected him to show up!

Cao Cao says it as he shrugs his shoulders.

“My apologies, Shiva-sama. I had no intention of hiding but I didn’t want to interrupt your discussion.”

“Fufufu, you’ve come to see the Sekiryuutei, right?”

Cao Cao answers “Yes” to Shiva’s question.

Cao Cao says it after moving his eyes to me.

“Who would ever thought even Shiva-sama would become fond of you. Seriously, you are continuing to grow every time I meet you.”

“Never thought you would come too. Did you come to see my promotion ceremony? Though you are not the type of person to say congratulations.”

“You are right. I came to observe your promotion ritual on behalf of Śakra. Though I thought it was a good opportunity. There is something I need to tell you.”

Cao Cao says it with a heroic face.

“I will obviously participate in the tournament as well. I got a permission from Śakra as well. I’m going to challenge myself to see how far my power will go together with my team I prepared. And if my wish which is to have a rematch with all of you gets fulfilled then I can’t ask for more.”

Cao Cao turns around and says it as he turns his back on me.

“———The High-class Devil, Hyoudou Issei. I really do want to crush your team

down head on. I am always yearning for you and Vali.”

Saying just that, Cao Cao leaves.

……

……Damn, I mean seriously. All of these guys are……!

Those who speak to me ——— are high in battle spirits and are observing me. Furthermore, this God called Shiva, the Prince of Asura, Cao Cao, and Raiser aren’t looking at me as Rias’s servant but are looking at me directly———.

……There is this emotion building inside me.

———The World Tournament where the strong will gather. And my own team, huh.

Then the thing Shiva said to me swirls inside me.

———You like strong individuals, right?

……Yeah, I sure do! There are just too many awesome guys around me who are taking my attention, that makes me want to aim for them, and that makes me want to surpass them!

I clench my fist really hard. The fire which has lit the fuse of my heart is getting even stronger.

After Cao Cao left it seems like Shiva and Mahabali finished their business so they left the scene together with Beelzebub-sama———.

There were continuous appearances of unexpected guests. All of us have calmed down and headed home after the party.

I look out the window while on our way home by train.

……I then see the sight of the stadium we passed by when we came here.

……That place will also become the stadium of the game.

All these frustrations are building inside me———

My own team———

The warriors that appeared in front of me are all seeking for me———.

I have become a High-class Devil———.

I am Rias’s [Pawn] but ——— I am a [King] as well.

……

……It’s not just your regular Rating Game. It’s a World Tournament type……

……To not participate while all of those guys I know are participating……

———There’s no way I’ll let that happen!

The fight against him. And the fight against him as well. Having that taken away from me by someone else is frustrating me even more.

Can I allow myself to simply stand and watch the guys I've fought lose against someone else besides me!?

———I then realised that I am standing on a new start line once again.

Myself who feels as though my burning soul is about to burn my body. But then there are those who approached me.

———It's Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel.

All three of them have a determined look.

Xenovia then says it heroically.

"……Ise, I have made up my mind."

Asia also nods to her words strongly.

"Yes, I am the same as Xenovia-san. I will follow the path Ise-san chose. ———I am your [Bishop]."

Ravel then asks me fearlessly.

"Now then, Ise-sama. Isn't there something in your mind which had been stimulated?"

……Geez, all of you know me very well……

"……Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel. Can you listen to what I have to say for a bit?"

I———then shared my thoughts to my first peerage members ever———

Life.3
Gremory's Graduation Ceremony

On the day of Rias's graduation———

On that day, Rias woke up early as usual and started to put her uniform on as usual.

However———this is going to be the last time she will be wearing it as a high school student. She said she wanted to head to school before the others find out so she went to school ahead of time while taking Akeno-san with her.

———She says it to me as well.

“Ise, you come with us as well.” Rias, Akeno-san, and I head to school with just the three of us. On our way there Akeno-san grabs my arm so naturally a situation in which Rias competes with her by taking my other arm unfolds. It’s like usual. But from tomorrow this won’t be happening anymore. When I think about that……I start to feel sad.

Kuou Academy should still be empty right now……or that’s what I thought anyway. Two familiar faces are standing in front of the school gate and are cleaning the area.

“Oh, Rias, Akeno, and Ise-kun. How are all of you doing?”

Oh man, the former student council president Sona and the former student council vice-president Shinra are cleaning the school gate with a broom! Wow, I never imagined there would be someone who would come to school earlier than Rias and Akeno-san……

The former president then says.

“Ufufu, I couldn’t help myself but wake up early today. There wasn’t anything I could do at home so I decided to come here a bit earlier to start cleaning. Then I found Tsubaki here……”

“Yes, for some reason I woke up early today of all days……”

So the four graduates ended up waking early huh. Rias, Akeno-san, the former student council president and the former student council vice-president start to laugh.

After saying goodbye to both the former student president and the former student

vice-president, we headed to the old school building. ———We are on our way to the ORC room.

The three of us enter the room.

The view of the club room is no different than usual. Even though Rias and Akeno-san haven't shown up that much lately, the rest of us still continued to use it normally. We can't suddenly become pathetic just because the seniors left after all.

This place is……a room which Rias and others rebuilt.

Rias goes to the club president's desk slowly.

"Ufufu, I will make some tea then."

Akeno-san starts to boil water like usual.

Rias sits on the club-president's chair. It really has been a while since I last seen this view. Right now it is Asia who is sitting on that chair. I feel bad for Asia but that chair does seem to be tailor-made to suit Rias.

Rias then says.

"……It was just the two of us until Yuuto and others joined here wasn't it, Akeno?"

"Yes. We went around the academy in order to preserve this club somehow. Even though we lacked in number of members."

Akeno-san starts to chuckle.

"Even still, we couldn't increase the number of our members at first, considering the issue of our true identities…… Did you know, Ise? That at the beginning Sona and Tsubaki came here frequently? That's why it wasn't unexpectedly lonely at all."

"That was something we could do only at that time."

Hmm, it's my first time hearing that. So when Rias was in her first year, the former student council president and vice-president came here,so it was just the four of them spending their time here.

"Even a year after that, the only person who joined our club was Yuuto and even still we only had three members. That boy was very formal and considerate with us more than needed to be because he was a year below us."

"He sure did come here before both of us arrived and cleaned this place. He did things like cleaning the floors and the windows and he even went as far as clean the whole old school building. ……Even though it was only the three of us using this place. I am quite sure that Yuuto-kun was working really hard because he wanted us to use this place to our heart's content."

……That Kiba had a time when he acted like that when he was a first year, huh. Knowing his personality this isn't surprising.He would act that way. He adores Rias and Akeno-san like his older sisters more than anyone———

"……It really was a shock when we became a third year. When we thought the only new members were only going to be Koneko and Gasper———Ise, Asia, Xenovia,

Irina, and Ravel joined this club while Azazel and Rossweisse became the supervisors of this club. Fufu, we increased the number of people all at once.”

“Ufufu, now we won’t have anyone question our club due to the lack of members anymore.”

Yeah. More people started to join after I came here. ……I don’t know anything about the club when it was lacking in numbers so I can’t imagine what’s it like to have just two or three people.

This is quite a big old school building. ……So it was too big for them I guess.

From there Rias became silent. That’s because she is looking around the room with such sad and loving eyes———

But Rias is also laughing as if she finds it funny.

“……Though we will continue to use this place for Devil’s work from tomorrow as well. Rather than separating from this place for eternity, we will be using this place more frequently from now on. ……Though I do feel really sad that I won’t be able to visit this place after school as a student anymore.”

“……These three years, it sure does feel like they were short, doesn’t it, Rias?”

“……For a Devil’s life, three-years is just an instant. ———But.”

“ “It sure was a good time.” ”

Both of them say the same thing at the same time with the same tone.

The two of them start to laugh for that.

Akeno-san then says.

“This experience will be my eternal treasure. Rias, thank you for inviting me to this place. I really enjoyed my time here.”

She gives me and Rias a cup of the black tea she just made and then said that. ———There are tears in her eyes.

Rias says it as she lifts her cup.

“I am also glad that I invited you here. You have my thanks for supporting me this far as my club vice-president. And please do take care of me from now on as well, Akeno. My [Queen], as well as my best friend……”

Rias makes the brightest smile she can.

It sure does make me think that there are times which only these two can share.

Rias then says it to me.

“The story of the past of me and Akeno. I wanted to share it with you that’s why we brought you here with us. But it seems like we need to share it with others as well.”

That’s because we started hearing footsteps getting closer.

The one who comes in by opening the door are ——— the other members! It seems

like they came chasing after us since they somehow predicted this. It seems like Kiba and Gasper also got a call from them so they are with them as well.

Irina then says.

“Geez! Rias-san, Akeno-san, and Ise-kun! You came here while keeping it a secret from us!”

Rossweisse-san came rushing in with her formal uniform.

“Please don’t leave me, your supervisor, behind!”

Kiba then says it with a smile.

“How about we do the final club activity with the members here? Even just having a talk sounds fine.”

The remaining students and also Rossweisse-san respond by saying “sounds good!”.

Rias and Akeno-san look at each other and burst into laughter.

“Yeah, I guess I will have all of you tag along with Akeno and my final ORC activity till is the time for our graduation ceremony. Akeno, please make tea for everyone as well.”

“Oh my. Understood, Buchou.”

Like this, we are told of the past of Rias and Akeno-san till the time allowed us———

It was really fun since we are told of an embarrassing story of Kiba and Gasper.

……This may be the last time Rias and Akeno-san come here in their uniform.

But ——— even from now, we will always be together.

And furthermore, they will always be Rias-buchou and Akeno-fukubuchou to us.

It happens right before the ceremony.

When we came out from the classroom and were walking on the corridor which leads to the gymnasium, I get a glimpse of someone talking to Rias.

Oh my! It’s Sairaorg-san!

“So you came, Sairaorg.”

“Congratulation on graduating, Rias. It is my cousins and my peers’ important graduation after all. Let me congratulate all of you today.”

I run towards them and talked to them.

“Sairaorg-san!”

I wave my hand. But Sairaorg-san smiles at seeing me and then says;

“Hyoudou Issei, behave more elegantly. You are a High-class Devil now, after all.”

“Y-Yes. Though I still don’t get the feeling that I am one.”

“Fu, you will eventually. That’s what a real man is.” When we are having such discussion, Rias gets called by another graduate: “Rias-san, it’s about time we return to the classroom.” Rias also responds by saying, “Yes, thank you.”

“Then Ise, Sairaorg. I will be heading off then. Thank you for coming today.”

Just saying that, Rias goes inside the school building.

Sairaorg-san and myself are left behind.

Sairaorg-san then says it to me.

“I couldn’t say it last time since it was your important ritual…… But I am also planning to participate in the tournament.”

“Yes, I knew you would.”

Or else it wouldn’t be like Sairaorg-san at all. It’s a tournament in where all the strong people and Gods will be gathering at. There is no reason for him to not participate.

Sairaorg-san then smirks.

“It’s those guys that we are talking about. They must have sent you a declaration of challenge. It isn’t hard to imagine at all.”

“Well, I did have all these people sending me their words.”

……Yeah, there were Vali, Saji, Raiser, Shiva, Mahabali, and Cao Cao that spoke to me about it,

Sairaorg-san says it again straight to my face.

“I don’t like to say it in a vague way so let me say it clearly. ———Participate in the tournament. No matter in what way. I don’t know if I can have a rematch with you and Rias, but knowing you two will participate will burn up my passion. Even if our opponent may be a God, the intense days of battle which you and I overcome won’t be in vain. Hyoudou Issei, I shall be waiting for you.”

Just after saying that, Sairaorg-san walks towards the gymnasium as one of the guests.

……I know, Sairaorg-san.

……I have already made up my mind!

I clench my fist. But right now I am a student who needs to send off the graduates. I walk into the gymnasium with a clear state of mind———

And then the graduation ceremony begins———

Accompanied by the applause coming from the current students and the guardians, the graduates enter the gymnasium.

I am curious and look at where the guardians are sitting.

A crimson-haired gentleman with a digital camera in one of his hands appears within my sight. Ah, it's Rias's dad! Sitting next to him is Rias's mom. She looks young! Other guardians probably think that she is Rias's older sister or something.

Barakiel-san is also here……and he's already crying so much that his nose is running. And he's obviously recording the ceremony with his digital camera. …… Barakiel-san, the ceremony just started. Ah, Akeno-san, who is walking at the centre of the gymnasium, sees Barakiel-san and her face turn red! She must be embarrassed since her dad is in tears already……

I wonder what will happen to Barakiel-san when Akeno receives her certificate or when she sings the graduation song……

Ah, a silver-haired woman! Grayfia-san is sitting a bit away from them. ……It's been a while since I last saw Grayfia-san. Oh, and next to her is sitting a crimson-haired boy ——— Milicas! Maybe they came here on behalf of Sirzechs-sama.

And so the ceremony begins with the national anthem, the school anthem, and then it ends with the passing of their certificate.

Xenovia, who is the student council president, comes up to the stage to represent the current students and to give farewell to the graduates by giving her speech.

I would never have imagined Xenovia would give her thanks to the graduates. You wouldn't imagine her in this situation when you first met her or when she was the member of our club.

[The formal reply from the graduates will be made by their representative, Shitori Souna-san.]

"Yes."

Then the former student council president is called over for the formal reply from the graduates so she comes up on the stage.

[In March, when the smells of Spring floats, we will adventure out from this school.]

The former president, who stood on the stage, started with such a greeting and then gave her thanks for all of those involved in this ceremony.

She spoke of her memories from when she was a first year up to the events which left strong impression to her.

[We experienced many kind of meetings in the past three years……as well as separations. The experiences we had by meeting many people in this place will definitely become an irreplaceable memory to us. And also for those we separated from———]

The former president stops for a moment there. There is a single teardrop falling from her eye.

[……I would like to move forward while believing that we will meet again with those we separated from one day in the future. I believe showing them how much we matured when we reunite with them will be the most important thing.]

……I can understand that the last words are dedicated to Serafall-sama and to the

others that weren’t able to come here.

Yeah, it’s exactly like what the former president said. We need to move forward while believing that we will definitely meet them again and need to show them how much we have matured when we reunite with them.

That’s the most important thing———

[———From the third-year representative, Shitori Souna.]

After she bows her head down she receives much applause.

Like this, the graduation proceeds forward quietly until we send off the graduates ———.

The third years who finished their ceremony———

There's some who are smiling. Some who are in tears. Some who are embracing each other. Some who are taking pictures together. There are many different kinds of behaviour.

Among those students, Rias and Akeno-san,who finished their ceremony, are walking past the school gate while carrying the cylindrical container with the certificate inside it.

The ones awaiting them are us, the ORC members. We need to take Rias and Akeno-san to a place where they won’t be seen much by the other students.

Since the ceremony ended, there is something I want to tell Rias. It’s an important issue. Something important for the both of us———.

But before that there are those who need to say something to her.

It’s the trio of Kiba, Koneko, and Gasper. The truth is I had been consulting with these three. That’s why I will give it my all in helping them. More like, do it guys!

I push the three of them and make them face Rias.

“First of all, the trio of Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper want to say something. Hurry, you three have made up your mind already, haven’t you?”

Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper stand in front of Rias and have a nervous look.

“Y-Yeah. U-Umm……congratulations on your graduation.”

“Congratulations.”

“Congratulations!”

It’s rare to see Kiba turn this red and make a panicked voice. Well, I can understand the reason why after hearing it from them. But these three are the ones who said they want to do it so then they need to be brave and do it.

“Yes, thank you, Yuuto, Koneko, Gasper.”

Rias smiles happily.

But Kiba continues while feeling shy.

“S-Since……you have……already graduated……from Kuou academy high school division and retired from being the club president of ORC……”

Rias starts to chuckle at seeing Kiba and the other two acting a bit confused.

“Geez, Yuuto, Koneko, Gasper. What is it? The three of you aren’t acting like you usually do. You need to tell me clearly of what you are trying to say———”

Then the three of them says it while interrupting Rias’s words.

“———Rias-neesan.”

Koneko-chan and Gasper continues after Kiba’s bold act.

“R, Rias-neesama……”

“R, Rias, o-oneechan~!”

Rias, who is at the centre of attention, is shocked by what they said that and froze.

It must have been something she couldn’t anticipate.

“We thought it would fit better to call you in such a way rather than calling you Buchou……”

Yes, that’s why they consulted with me the and other girls about. As Rias and Akeno-san’s graduation approached us, we were called by those three regarding how they should address Rias.

Rias will be graduating and she will officially resign from being “Buchou”. It would be weird to call her the former club president, hence the reason why they mustered up their courage and showed such determination.

Hearing their determination, the new ORC consisted of Asia, Xenovia, Irina, Ravel, Rossweisse-san, and myself motivated them to do it by saying “You guys must do it!”

And so, Rias who was called in such a way———

“……” She is silently shedding her tears and is covering her face with her hands.

Kiba and the other two panic at her sudden change.

“U-Umm, was it weird!? Were we impolite!?”

“W-We are sorry!”

“S-Sorry~!”

Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper who apologise to her. But Rias shakes her head to the side.

Rias wipes her tears with her finger but it doesn’t stop her from shedding more tears.

“……No, that’s not it. It’s because I’m so happy…… I never thought I would hear words which would make me more emotional than the ceremony once I passed

through the school gate.”

She must really be happy. Rias is simply shedding her tears.

She really must have wanted them to call her that way. Rias views her peerage as her family. She saw these three as her younger brothers and younger sister.

That’s why she must have wanted them to call her like that.

After Rias calms herself down she says it to these three with a naughty look.

“Call me that one more time.”

“ “ “Eh?” ” ”

The three of them are dumbfounded by her sudden words. She says it again while putting her ears towards them.

“Oh, you won’t call me that then?” Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper turn red again and says it with courage.

“Ah, umm……Rias-neesan……”

“……Rias-neesama.”

“……O-Oneechan.” “Ufufufu, this sure does make me happy.” Rias becomes so happy that she starts jumping on the spot.

Yeah, she really must have wanted them to call her that way. It really must have been an amazing surprise.

Seeing this, Akeno-san says it to them in a teasing manner.

“Oh my, I want to be called Oneechan as well.”

Kiba says it with a troubled look.

“We think of you as our older sister as well……but we thought it's more fitting to call you Akeno-san both at private and public times……”

The good-looking guy is acting like a younger brother fitting his age……no, more like younger than his age. The former student vice-president Shinra……No, Shinra-senpai will also have blood bursting from her nose if she sees this.

“W-We will call you it one day! But our heart was already at its limit by preparing to say Rias-oneechan~!”

Everyone burst in laughter after hearing Gasper’s words.

Well, I guess time will fix the way they address Akeno-san. ……Yeah, it sure does feel like its peaceful. Maybe Great Red and Ophis inside me are being very satisfied at seeing this.

……Now then, I guess it’s my turn then.

I take a step forward to Rias.

“Can I also say something?”

“Sure, so what do you want to say, Ise?”

I continue while scratching my cheek.

“Umm……there’s one thing I made up my mind about. Once you graduated, you will no longer be Buchou of this ORC nor will you be the student of this division, so that’s why I wanted to make a proper decision and……”

What I made my mind about ——— is my usual conversation with Rias.

To be honest, I was a bit troubled in the way we were talking to each other. I know inside my head that during our private times I need to talk to her without being formal or without creating a gap between our social standing since we are dating.

But the situation around us has been hectic as we had to go to the Underworld, Heaven, and country of Vampires……where we met all sorts of people and there were times we had to talk to VIP people. And every time we encountered such situations, our public life and private life gets mixed up and there are times in which the way I talk to her gets mixed up as well.

———Right now I am confused in how I should talk to Rias.

But I thought being confused by it when I’m dating Rias would be bad. So I felt I needed to make a proper decision definitely.

That’s why her graduation ceremony was a good occasion.

Yeah, I shall act like it from today. The relation between me and Rias———

I say it to her straightforwardly. In order to show my manly side———

“Rias, congrats on graduating. From today, I am hoping I can talk to you casually. My own graduation from talking formally to you……I guess. There will be times when I need to speak in a formal manner to you in public as you are my Master. But apart from that, I am hoping I can talk to you in a more casual manner like this.”

Rias makes a big smile. She then grabs my hand and shows how happy she is.

“Yes, I’m so happy to hear that. Today really was the best graduation!”

I’m so glad.

The others and myself showed our determination today and it feels like we can enter in a new relation with her.

Yeah, that is why I should tell her about it right now.

“And there is one more thing I need all of you to hear.”

I make eye-contact with Asia, Ravel, and Xenovia. They gather around me. I say it after confirming that.

“———I will also be participating in the Rating Game tournament with my own team. Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel are determined to follow me.”

I revealed my thoughts to Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel on that day when we were returning from my high-class promotion ceremony when we were inside the train.

They accepted my thought gladly.

I couldn't help it. I couldn't resist the flame ignited inside me.

If this was an ordinary Rating Game then I would have happily participated as Rias's [Pawn]. But due to several factors such as the world tournament, the requirements to participate in it, and the words passed on to me from my rivals, I was into a state where I couldn't resist in participating on my own since the "manly" passion inside me was burning.

I'm going to create my own team so I can fight those guys———.

I ask Rias straightforward.

"Will you allow me to participate, Rias?"

Rias put on a courageous look and nods.

"Yes, of course. Since you have become a High-class Devil, there will be no way you could decline Sairaorg and Vali's request."

Yeah, I knew you would say that……! You always watched over me while standing next to me. And she's my important benefactor, my master, and my lover, the one who led me this far!

Akeno-san, Kiba, Koneko-chan, and Gasper gather around Rias.

Rias then says it in front of my team.

"———I will also participate. As I am going to officially participate in the Rating Game in the future, the upcoming event will be a good opportunity. No matter what result we get, participating in it will be a great experience for us. Even if that means that we have to fight you———"

Yes, as the rule goes it is possible for us to fight each other. This is indeed the factor you would rarely be able to experience in your average Rating Game.

Rossweisse-san,who doesn't know which side she should pick, is really confused.

Rias then says.

"Rossweisse."

"Y-Yes, what is it, Rias-san?"

"You should be going to Ise's team as well." [———!?]

Everyone becomes shocked at her words! It was natural for Asia, Xenovia, and Ravel to be in my team since they have told me that they wanted to since before.

But it's not like I made such promise with Rossweisse-san so it wouldn't be weird if she stayed in Rias's team.

"You would be able to fill the hole by going to Ise's team rather than staying in my team."

"B-But, Rias-san! E-Even still, I am your servant and———"

Rossweisse-san turned into a Devil in a rush, but now she is feeling grateful to Rias from the bottom of her heart and is now one of the most important members of Rias Gremory's peerage. Rossweisse-san is also feeling proud of that fact.

Rias hugs Rossweisse-san gently and then says this gently.

"Yes, you are my precious servant. However, I believe that you will be able to release all your potential by serving under Ise. And Ise will also be in need of your help. He will need your strength more than me. I believe that your magic will become Ise's support. I didn't bring you up in the trade several days ago, but still, Rossweisse, I want you to help Ise."

Rossweisse-san hugs Rias while having tears in her eyes.

Rias then says.

"Didn't I say that this isn't going to be an eternal farewell before? From a large perspective the members here are all Rias Gremory's peerage, you know? My comrades and my family. It's just that we may happen to be competing with each other sometimes. We are a family that will continue to live together tomorrow and even the day after tomorrow."

"Uuu~! Rias-saaaaaan~! I! I will help Ise-kun, don't ya worry! Watch over me with warm eyes, will yaaaa~!"

Ah man, her accent is back……

I see. So Rossweisse-san will also be coming to me———

But, I wonder if that's okay? I look at Rias's face after feeling worried. Perhaps she reads through my mind so this is what she says.

"I am also exploring my own team. One of the fixations is to build a new team while having the old ORC members at the centre of it. Though the one thing I'm planning right now will be for the upcoming tournament."

So ——— a new team which has the old ORC members as the core of it, huh.

Rias continues.

"……After meeting Ise, I have encountered many situations and have met with all sorts of people. That may have been destiny, but what triggered it is the meeting with Ise and Asia. From then on, I have met people starting from Xenovia. That is really important to me. But somewhere inside me is telling me it was something which was brought by Ise who is the Sekiryuutei."

"No, Rias that is———"

That isn't it! This is all destiny! It's not just me, but I think those were attracted to you by simple destiny. It was bound to happen!

It seems like Rias understands that too, so she continues by interrupting my words.

"I know what you want to say. If I start to think too seriously about it in such ways, then I would be devaluing myself. That's why I have got rid of such a way of thinking and concluded that everything happened because it had to happen. But you know,

planning a new team with the original ORC members as the centre of it definitely seemed interesting. More rather, simply imagining it would take my interest. I am positive there is a team which is possible to form by using all the battle experience we had as a reference. ———How can I defeat Sairaorg's team, Sona's team, and Vali's team……? I wasn't able to go to sleep by simply imagining it. Being able to have such imagination is what the upcoming tournament is."

———That is true.

I couldn't help but feel my dream and ambition of making my own team freely, which is something in according to the upcoming tournament's rule. I ended up thinking all the time for what I would need to do in order for my team to defeat Vali's team and Cao Cao's team.

Perhaps the thing Rias has been writing on my desk the night before the ceremony means……that she was coming up with a team for the tournament!

Irina raises her hand when Rias and I spoke of what was going in our minds.

"U-Umm…… This is a good occasion so can you guys listen to me for a sec?"

Saying that she continues.

"Currently there are teams organized for the tournament which are mainly comprised of the Reincarnated Angels. The team which has the Joker as the [King] has begun being formed. But I'm planning to decline from joining that team."

Irina looks at my way. She has determined eyes.

"———I want to join Ise-kun's team."

[———!?]

Everyone becomes shocked at her words! If Irina who isn't a Devil or my servant says that then everyone here will be shocked!

Irina then continues.

"It is something I decided on my own which I kept it a secret from others ever since when Ise-kun's High-class promotion ceremony ended. Even the higher-ups are fine if it's Ise-kun and they are even supportive of it."

Irina looks up at the sky.

"Everyone in Heaven is important to me. I haven't forgotten my faith. There isn't a day when I don't think about the lord and Michael-sama. ———But the feeling of wanting to fight alongside Xenovia and Asia-san in a big competition like this was also strong. In the end, I couldn't let go off that feeling."

She walks towards my team and then stands besides me. She then shouted out from her heart.

"I-I……want to be honest with the feeling of love inside me and live like that! That's why I want to fight as a part of Ise-kun's team!"

……Irina. You are that determined to come to my team……

“If Irina is willing to come then I can’t ask for a more strong support. ———Will you join my team?”

When I ask her, she replies with a big smile.

“Yes, of course! Darling!”

Irina jumps into Asia and Xenovia's arms.

“Xenovia! Asia-san! Once again, please take care of me!”

“Sure, Irina! You and I are an eternal swordswomen pair! And with Asia———”

“Yes! The team of this three is unbeatable!”

The three of Irina, Xenovia, and Asia are hugging each other and starts spinning around together.

So Irina and Rossweisse-san are now in my team…… Looks like I need to discuss about the team with Ravel from scratch.

Now then. I have discussed my relation with Rias and the Rating Game tournament.

This is the final stunt. The man, Hyoudou Issei’s biggest and the most important shining moment! I decided that I will tell Rias once she graduates!

I take Rias’s hand and then tell her.

“I want to tell you something more, which is really important.”

“……What is it?”

I then tell her directly!

“One day, I will be able to stand beside you equally……more like, I will achieve a social standing equal to you. I want us to become a pair which would be called fitting from anyone’s perspective as the same High-class Devil. What I want to say is——— in the future I want you to lead the same life as me.”

———The promise of the future.

I decided to tell her once I become a High-class Devil. I decided I will tell Rias once it is her graduation.

That’s why I told her. I told her, god dammmmmmmmmmmit!

It seems like this was something really unexpected for Rias.

“———!”

Seems like she has a feeling she can’t express by words.

She turns all red, and then———

“……Yes!”

……! She gave me her answer!!

The promise of our futureeeeee!!

She gave me her consennnnnnnnnnt!!

[Ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo~!!]

Everyone becomes so hyped that they start shouting.

“Alrighhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhht!”

I scream on the spot and shouted my joy by full throttle!

Azazel-sensei! I did ittttttt!

I! I will polish myself to become the manliest man and definitely will become a man suited for Rias, oh yes I wiii

———Perhaps they came because they heard my voice. Matsuda and Motohama suddenly appear from nowhere.

“Ah, you were here, Ise!”

“Ah, Rias-senpai is crying!”

Both of them get shocked when they see Rias crying.

Yeah, this is a good occasion. I'll tell them. Let's tell them.

I stand beside Rias.

"Ah, I should be clean about it. Matsuda, Motohama. ———The truth is, we are dating."

I tell them while stroking below my nose with my finger.

"……"

"……"

The two of them couldn't understand what they were told for a moment. But it appears they know it's real after they looked at Rias and my face where Rias even nodded her head.

" "Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeh!?" "

The shout of their soul was even louder than our shouts from before which echoed within the area———

That day, at the after party for the graduation ceremony, the two idiots started asking me for answers about this and that.

……The two guys who seemed like they are shedding tears of blood started screaming in tears by calling me a "traitor!" and telling me to "go and die!" with hatred in their words.

Hehe, well, it looks like I solved many issues today.

After the after party, I did a trade with Rias to make Rossweisse-san my servant.

———Now then, let's do this. Let's go.

The real deal starts from here! First of all, I need to find more potential team members!

Even if they aren't my servants, I will gather my own team members in order to win through the world tournament and defeat strong foes!

Ddraig, I will have you tag along with me, okay?

[Yeah, of course. As long as Albion and Vali Lucifer are participating in the tournament, then there is no reason for me, no, there is no reason for us to not appear.]

You're right about that. I won't allow Vali to lose against someone besides me.

———Wait for me, Vali. Wait for me, my rivals!

It Begins Feast

A bit after Rias-neesan's graduation, the summer holidays began———

All of us had an express tour starting from Hokkaido, which is located at the North, down to Okinawa, located in the South, for the graduation tour. It was a tour filled with many emotions, but I'll use another occasion to talk about that.

During such a tour, on the morning of the final day when we were at Okinawa we woke up almost at the same time ——— Ise-kun, Asia-san, Xenovia, Irina-san, Ravel-san, and Rossweisse-san had already left the hotel in Naha.

Rias-neesan who found out about this sighed in astonishment.

"……To behave like, no, to take action like a [King]. It sure is like him."

Yes, during the holidays, no matter how much spree he stirred, he must have left the hotel with the right attitude.

Rias-neesan looks out to the blue ocean from the window of the hotel room as she stroked her red hair back.

"Now then. We should also start making plans for the tournament. Obviously after we eat our breakfast, that is."

And so, the feast begins quietly———

What will begin now is an intense feast to find out who is the "strongest" among all of those rivals we have met so far and among the strong foes we are going to meet from now on.

Life.3
The Opening Ceremony of the Rating Game World Tournament, the “Azazel Cup”!

Part I

It was already slightly past mid-April—.

After school, I — Kiba Yuuto, started our club activities in the club room.

“Today’s activity is an investigative report on the Youkai.”

Asia-buchou gave us this task and we were now presenting the results of our report. Koneko-chan distributed a copy of the report to everyone, which was compiled from the information that all of us had previously researched and summarised. As new first year students, Le Fay-san and Bennia-san began to read it with great interest since they were also new members.

“So there are also Youkai in this town, but I wonder what kind of Youkai they are.”

<< There are many things that I do not know. Based on my knowledge, there should be a high variance in their appearance. >>

Both of them seemed to fit in to Kuoh Academy’s uniform very well.

“Umu! I will join you as well! If it’s about Youkai, then you can leave it to me!”

It was Kunou-san, who came over to visit us after her primary school classes ended. She moved into the Hyoudou household starting from this Spring, and then officially enrolled into Kuoh Academy’s primary school. Because she had to mingle with humans, her ears and tails were usually concealed, just like Koneko-chan’s. There was also a new face in the club room—.

“…Umm, Isaiah. How do I read this kanji?”

Tosca asked me as she looked at the report. I immediately taught her how to pronounce it with

“This is—”

Indeed, Tosca also transferred into Kuoh Academy’s middle school division. Although there were many areas that she was unfamiliar with, her new life was slowly, yet surely beginning. She was also able to come here to visit us after school. She was able to learn a lot more at school, experience so many more things, and laugh more as well, so I was happy for her. Of course, your middle school uniform also suits you, Tosca. Like this, there were new members who joined our newly restructured club during the new school term. However, there were several members who were absent today. Kunou threw a gaze at the vacant seat.

“Ise and the others haven’t come yet huh.”

Kunou-san’s mumbled words revealed a trace of loneliness. Indeed, Ise-kun hadn’t yet come today. Likewise, Ravel-san wasn’t here either. Asia-san apologised to her.

“I’m sorry Kunou-san, Ise-san is—”

“I understand. —He’s preparing for the Tournament, right?”

Indeed, just as Kunou-san said, as the leader of his team – the [King] - he was constantly recruiting members for the Rating Game World Tournament, as well as training his team since the beginning of the Spring break. It was because of that that he was late today. Asia-san and Xenovia originally wanted to accompany him, but both of them were unable to be absent due to their positions. Ise-kun had also said to them

“You two absolutely must be there as the Kaichou and Buchou!!!.”

Then again, tomorrow will be the opening day of the Rating Game World Tournament. Time is running out, Ise-kun. Although our team doesn’t have you, what’s surprising is that we’re not only completely prepared, but everything has gone so smoothly that it’s hard to believe. —At that time, the sound of rushing footsteps came from the corridor. The door was forcefully pushed open as Ise-kun and Ravel-san made their way in.

“We’re late! Sorry!”

Wow, despite how busy he was, he still came for the club activities, as expected of Ise-kun.

“Well then, let’s all go over the report once more.”

After they heard that from me, the activity of the new Occult Research Club with all its members present officially began. The third years consisted of the Buchou Asia-san, me as the Fukubuchou, Ise-kun, Irina-san, as well as Xenovia who occasionally dropped by. The second years consisted of Koneko-chan, Gasper-kun, and Ravel-san. The new first years were Le Fay-san and Bennia-san. There were also our preliminary members consisting of Tosca from the middle school, and Kunou from the primary school. After Rias-neesan and Akeno-san left the Occult Research Club that they reconstructed, our members began their activities, and it became splendid and lively again—. But, Rias-neesan and Akeno-san occasionally come here in the afternoon after their lectures have ended. Well, tomorrow is going to be the opening ceremony of the Rating Game World Tournament. After our activities, Koneko-chan, Gasper-kun and I will have to join Rias-neesan and the others for a strategy meeting. Ise-kun, I’m looking forward to it. Your new team!

Part 2

And so, although that was what I was looking forward to yesterday, when it came to the day of the opening ceremony, none of Ise-kun's team members had arrived yet. It was right before the opening ceremony was going to begin. In front of us, Rias Gremory's Team, was the enormous stadium where the opening ceremony would be conducted in. It had been newly constructed within the Maous' territory of the Underworld for the purpose of the Tournament. The size of the facility was beyond belief, and if it was compared to the size of the Tokyo Dome [121], its width would be greater by at least ten times. Helicopters had begun filming from above the stadium and there were media cameras set up everywhere within the stadium, as it would not only be broadcast live throughout the entire Underworld, but also across every faction's territory. The audience was composed of visitors of every faction who had come here today so it was full to the brim. Those of us who were contestants had all gathered in the centre of the enormous Game Field. Not only were there the Devils that the Rating Game originated from, but there were also Angels, Fallen Angels, Humans, Youkai, and many other races. There were even God-class beings amongst them.

With Rias-neesan acting as the [King], the rest of our team included Akeno-san, Koneko-chan, Gasper-kun, our newly added members, and myself. The person who seemed a bit overwhelmed by seeing a crowd of so many other players was — Valerie-san.

"There sure are a lot of people."

"Valerie, don't leave my side."

Gasper-kun was tightly holding onto Valerie-san's hand out of fear that she would get lost if she left his side. Indeed, a new member of ours was Valerie-san. Naturally, she was not participating as one of Rias Gremory's servant Devils, but as a non-servant member of our team in this tournament.

"Oh dear me, there are people everywhere I look."

The person who spoke was a cloaked girl who had put the edge of her hand against her forehead as she gazed out into the distance. The girl's white and black streaked hair was tied up above her head. The cloaked girl said to Koneko-chan

"It seems like there are more than a thousand teams participating. If memory serves me, it was one thousand and forty five. That said, it seems like not all team members will be present here."

"Nonetheless, the presence of more people doesn't make a difference to me."

The girl revealed a faint smile as she said that. I asked the girl

"Is it your first time at a large event venue like this? —Lint-san."

"Well, it is the first time for me. After all, I've been in the training facilities affiliated with the warriors' training institution for a long time. No, but there are simply humans humans humans, Devils Devils Devils, Fallen Angels, Angels Angels, and

occasionally even Gods? Really, I wonder what is going on here?”

Lint Selzan’s tone was completely light-hearted. The new Gremory Team also had another new member. She had been added in as a [Knight], like me, to fill in for the vacancy that Xenovia left behind as a sword-wielder. Details aside, both the Church and the Grigori strongly recommended her, so she became a member of our team. By the way, similarly to Valerie, neither of them are members of Rias Gremory’s peerage. At present, they are simply members who have been invited to our team for the sake of the tournament…. Selzan—. If she was introduced to Ise-kun, he would definitely be so surprised to hear that name that he would be left speechless. After all, even I was rather astounded when I heard of it. After meeting her, I could more or less see that person’s shadow. Their frivolous tones were quite similar, but she wasn’t vulgar in comparison to that person. In fact, our team actually has another new member, our other team member…. But it looks like he isn't here. Well, whatever, I’ll see him when the time for our match comes anyway…. However, according to that person’s temperament, if the opponent isn’t immensely strong, then they may not even show up…. At least after having completed the registration of members, there isn’t a problem even if he doesn’t show up at the opening ceremony…. Speaking of which, the opening ceremony only requires either the [King] or the [Queen] of a team to attend. In our case, almost all of us are attending.

Now then, I’ll briefly explain the general outline of this tournament. The first is eligibility for participation. There aren’t any particular restrictions on the participants, and Devils are able to participate in teams that aren’t the peerage they belong to. The only one who is essential for the registration is the core of the team, the [King]. As for the rest of the team members, all they have to do is finalise their registrations before the beginning of a match, and at the same time, changes of team members are also allowed. (Although there seem to be a limit on the number of members who can be changed at a time), but only the [King] cannot be changed. It is also forbidden for players to participate in two different teams. If such a thing is discovered, they will be immediately disqualified. There is also a penalty for the teams the player belonged to. That is to say, team members can be constantly replaced in this tournament, and new members can also be added to the team. Our team still had some vacancies, and so it was not complete.

Next are the tournament’s rules for team formation. Like the Rating Games, there are at most one of the [King] and [Queen], there are at most two of the [Rook], [Bishop] and [Knight] roles, while there can be a maximum of eight [Pawn] positions. This caps the maximum number of team members to sixteen. Players are registered according to their respective roles. As mentioned earlier, the composition of a team is not restricted, so the [King] is able to register their players to roles in accordance with their preferences. Although a Devil might have originally been a [Knight], it is permitted for him to participate as a [Rook] in this tournament. According to the original [Evil Pieces] and the rules of the Rating Game, the value and number of pieces used to turn someone into their servant varies based on their natural qualities and abilities. But, this concept has practically been abolished under the rules of the current tournament. The special characteristics of each of the chess pieces will activate at the beginning of a match. Even for people who aren’t using the Evil Pieces, as long as they are registered as a [Knight], they will gain the characteristic of increased speed at the beginning of a match. As for the Devils who use the Evil Pieces, if they are registered under a different piece from their original, their inherent

piece's characteristics will be overridden by their tournament piece's characteristics at the beginning of a match.

For example, if I were to participate as a [Rook], then I would lose the characteristics of my [Knight] piece during a match, and instead gain the characteristics of a [Rook] piece. This was what I thought were one of the most interesting rules of this competition. Secondly, the concept of a pawn piece's value had been invalidated in this tournament. Even if a servant originally possessed multiple pieces, it would become equivalent to having one unless they were a God-class being. A simple example would be Kuroka, who possesses two [Bishop] pieces, but according to the rules of this tournament, she is counted as having only one. That's why it would be possible for Vali to register both Kuroka and Le Fay-san as his bishops.

For those who are God-class beings, a single God-class being takes up two of the [Rook], [Knight], or [Bishop] pieces. For those who are regarded as powerful Gods, if they were considered in a one-to-one ratio with others, the competition would become too unbalanced. As such, under most circumstances, one God-class being is considered as being equivalent to two [Rook], [Knight], or [Bishop] pieces. Of course, for the people whose strength is comparable to that of a God-class being, they are also judged according to this standard. However, there is a limit to the conversion of a piece's value. The limitations for [Pawn] pieces are very strict. It is because a [Pawn] piece can be promoted to a [Queen] that such limitations are in place. Otherwise, there would be many [King] players who would register their strongest players as [Pawn] pieces, and thus the outcome of the Game would depend entirely on the pawns. If there were eight Ultimate-class Devils registered as [Pawn] pieces, who all then promoted to [Queen], the Game would become rather terrifying. Similarly, when God-class beings are registered as [Pawn] pieces, there are many limitations.

What follows are the so-called 'basics', which have essentially been abolished. Even though the number of God-class beings participating is less than ten percent, they are still opponents who cannot be underestimated. Among the Gods participating, the most famous one is Śakra[131]. He is one of the most watched figures. He was also attending the opening ceremony, and occupied a corner of the stadium. There was no one who dared to approach that God. When Śakra announced that he was going to participate, there were many other Gods who gave up on the tournament. He was the leader of the magnificent Four Heavenly Kings — Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Virūḍhaka, Virūpākṣa, Vaiśravaṇa[141]; he had immediately become the most favourable candidate.

"……"

And then there was the one who was staring silently at Śakra, the Prince of the Asuras, Mahabali. He had already entered a state of vigilance, and he seemed ready to unleash the fierce aura that covered his body onto Śakra at the earliest opportunity. And the person standing a slight distance away from him and watching on was—.

"Hohoho, you want to fight it out with the Heavenly Emperor? Don't worry; it won't be too late to think about it even when the time comes."

It was the first generation Sun Wukong, the Victorious Fighting Buddha.

“Hey, monkey, why isn’t this opening ceremony thing starting yet?”

“…Grruu I’m hungry.”

The ones beside him who complained were a bearded elderly man, and an old pig-headed man. They were the first-generation Sha Wujing, Golden-bodied Arhat , and the first-generation Zhu Bajie, Cleaner of the Altars.

“Aahhh, aahhh, why do I have to join you as well!?”

Whilst on the other side, a miniature Eastern Dragon was weeping — Yu-Long. In order to suit the opening ceremony, he reduced his own size.

“……”

The person who sat down silently in meditation was a boy wearing clothing of a lotus design — the Nezha Prince. This line-up was the team that the first-generation Sun Wukong originally led in the ‘Journey to the West’. They had been pushed into the category of being most noteworthy to watch due to their popularity. We had also greeted them earlier.

Next was the Flame Giant who had come from Northern Europe — Surtr. This Flame Giant was probably the most conspicuous person present. With a height of nearly twenty five metres (even this seems to be after a height limiter), a clone of him known as Second-sama was among one of Sirzechs-sama’s peerage members, but this one was the original.

[Gahahahaha!]

Amongst the people gathered in the stadium (at present), the largest one was a blue-skinned giant who was thirty metres tall. He had wings on his back, the upper body of a human, and the lower body of a snake. He was a player from the Greek Mythology, the King of Monsters — Typhon. There were also Gods who had come from other mythologies, but the few who were just mentioned are the most unique Gods among them. Most of the Gods who were regarded as the most powerful beings from various mythologies participated in the Evil Dragon War against Trihexa as part of the main force…but from the looks of things, there are still quite a few powerful Gods remaining. However, in regards to Gods being able to participate, many had the view that the competition would become unbalanced…. This concern was not incomprehensible. But precisely because this tournament exists, the participants also include a few strong contestants who can compete against the Gods. Moreover, we’ve also overcome that brutal Evil Dragon War, so our own strength has considerably improved. Even if our opponents are Gods, we won’t go down against them so easily.

This World Tournament gathered the strongest forces of every faction, so there was even the possibility of seeing an unknown team take down a God with strategy alone. According to the rumours, Champion Diehauser Belial, who should still be imprisoned, seems to have registered. It seems like it was something that the Maou Ajuka Beelzebub-sama did. Apparently his [Queen] is attending the opening ceremony on his behalf today. Under the circumstances that he is able to participate, knowing his personality, he would probably make some kind of statement, right…? Well, that’s also somewhat noteworthy.

Among the people who had formed a team within a short timeframe, they had other reasons aside from simply their reputation or honour. This was because the winning team of the tournament would receive a ‘victory prize’. —Being able to fulfil as many wishes as possible. That was what the ‘victory prize’ was. The VIPs of each faction had all supported Azazel-sensei and Sirzechs-sama who advocated the tournament, so they also made efforts to prepare the ‘victory prize’. The research of the Grigori, the technology from Heaven and the Underworld, the World Tree of Norse Mythology and so on, the mysteries of each mythology would be assembled together in order to fulfil the wishes of the champion team. There was no doubt that this announcement was the driving force behind the drastic increase in the number of participants. The participating Gods were also aiming for the ‘victory prize’. In the meantime, the request of ‘Please make the world more chaotic’ had already been denied in advance. Those who carried a wish gathered together. And as a result, the number of participating teams in this tournament was beyond measure. However, in order to enter the actual competition — there would only be sixteen teams in the final tournament. Looking at the number of participating teams, it would be very difficult to squeeze into the top sixteen teams.

According to Rias-neesan’s predictions, as the tournament progresses, the number of teams that abstain will slowly increase…. The qualifying rounds will begin tomorrow, and in comparison to Kuoh Academy’s schedule, it was good that it would continue until the end of our summer break. The system of qualifying rounds is based on the original Rating Game of the Devils, where the number of wins and losses — is in the form of points. This rule was borrowed from the game of chess that the Rating Game was based on. To begin with, each team had 1500 points, and they would accumulate more points by playing matches. If they defeated a team with a higher score than their own, they would receive more points. On the other hand, if they were defeated by a team with a lower score than their own, then their score would fall sharply. Matches in this format would last until the end of summer. At the end of this period, the sixteen teams with the highest score would progress into the final tournament. Since there are more than a thousand teams participating, with even Gods also participating, the threshold to progress into the finals is incredibly high. In addition, participation in the qualifying rounds was decided exclusively by each team. If they wanted to fight, and if they wanted to gain points, then they would register with the organisers, and they would then be matched to a team that also wanted to fight. In other words, the management of a team was entirely dependent on the team itself. Tuning the team’s status as well as its command was key. Rias-neesan said

“The adjustment of the entire team is the most critical thing. The key to victory is not about winning, but to avoid engaging in meaningless fights.”

“If you don’t plan out the schedule properly, you’ll only end up suffering.”

Akeno-san added. The most important thing would be the total number of points earned on the final day of the qualifying rounds. Even if there were several losses, as long as the final score was high enough, it would still be enough to pass the qualifiers. This was what Rias-neesan meant in that the key to victory was not winning. However, having more wins may well be a good thing since points could increase with every win. Even if there was a loss, it would not put anyone at a significant disadvantage. Therefore, it was important to adjust the whole team, so that when it came time to earn points, it wasn’t about winning every single match, but

to manage the points in the most optimal manner. Speaking of which…Ise-kun is really late. I looked at my watch as I confirmed that. It was already time for the opening ceremony. There had also been a broadcast announcement saying 'The opening ceremony will begin soon'. Gasper-kun also seemed worried about Ise-kun as he said

"Ise-senpai is somewhat late…. The minimum requirement for the opening ceremony is to have the [King] or [Queen] present…"

Could it be that someone new whom we don't recognise has come here as his [Queen] on their own while he's resting…? I don't think that's the case. After all, Ise-kun did say to me 'I'll definitely attend the opening ceremony!'. Just while we were worried about where Ise-kun was — the venue became even noisier than it already was.

"H-Hey! Look at that!"

Despite not knowing who shouted that out, we all looked up at the sky. As soon as we looked up — we noticed that there was an enormous object flying towards the venue! It was a flying boat with a hull that was reminiscent of a dragon! Every one of the media's cameras turned to capture that scene, and the host of the venue also exclaimed loudly.

<<Wow! A flying boat has appeared in the sky above the stadium! What's more, it's a flying ship adorned with the design of a dragon, and it has just appeared directly over the stadium! Ah! If we take a look at the footage from the helicopters, it appears as though there are people on board that airship!>>

The large screens within the stadium displayed a live stream. Upon seeing the figure of the person who was on the screen, we couldn't help but feel amazed. The people who appeared there were Ise-kun and the others wearing a crimson uniform! Rias-neesan exclaimed in surprise

"Ise!? T-Then, that flying ship is Ise's familiar?"

I see! There was a high chance that that flying boat was Ise-kun's familiar! The magic boat that Sirzechs-sama's [Rook] Surtr Second-sama had given to Ise-kun. It was originally so small that it looked like a model ship…but after a while of not having seen it, it had actually become such an enormous airship! Perhaps because of Ise-kun's growth, it had also grown large in proportion. After growing to such an extent, it had naturally become a flying fortress. Ise-kun's Dragon Deification may have also influenced its exterior dragon-like appearance. Ise-kun clicked his fingers, and the flying boat became enveloped in a dense smoke — and then became small. Ise-kun and the others then jumped directly down into the stadium, followed by a splendid landing. Ise-kun held Asia-san with a princess carry before letting her down, and moved towards us as soon as he caught sight of us. Ise-kun, Asia-san, Xenovia, Irina-san, Ravel-san, and Rossweisse-san weren't wearing Kuoh Academy's uniform, but a similarly styled red uniform; this was probably their team uniform. Following behind Ise-kun was a dragon who was more than ten metres long and with an appearance that was quite similar to the Devil Dragon Tannin-sama. He was Tannin-sama's son who had wanted to assist Ise-kun. So he also became a member of his team. With the body of an enormous dragon behind him, Ise-kun was really becoming more and more 'king-like'. However, there was also another member that

we didn't know. It was a masked person who wore a red cloak. The mask was also red, and one couldn't help but think of a dragon upon seeing it. The player had a slender body, so it was probably a woman…. Ise-kun smiled wryly as he said

"Ah, sorry to make you all wait. We finally finished our uniforms, but only at the last minute."

I see, so they were late because they were preparing their clothing. Rias-neesan asked Ise-kun

"Then that flying ship — is Ryuuteimaru?"

Asia-san nodded.

"Yes, in fact…its recent growth is what caught Ise-san's attention…"

…So he only noticed it by coincidence? Well, after all, since he wasn't always looking at it, perhaps even Ise-kun, as its master had almost forgotten about it. Unusual things always seem to happen at the beginning and end of the year.

"You finally came, Hyoudou Issei."

—At that time, upon seeing Ise-kun's flashy entrance, familiar faces began to come over one by one. The first one was Sairaorg Bael-san. Ise-kun also looked pleased to see Sairaorg Bael-san.

"Sairaorg-san! Yes, I've come. —Along with my team."

The next person was — Cao Cao.

"Hehe, it looks like I'll have an opportunity for revenge."

"Cao Cao! Yeah, I'll defeat you head-on this time!"

Ise-kun courageously responded to Cao Cao's challenge. Then, a special man stood before him. —Vali Lucifer.

"Hyoudou Issei, so you've come. Excellent."

Vali extended his fist out, to which Ise-kun also extended his. Their two fists bumped with each other.

"Yeah, Vali. Let's have a good battle as the Heavenly Dragons."

Afterwards, Rias-neesan majestically declared to Ise-kun as his master, lover, and opponent

"Ise, since you're participating, we'll be opponents. —I won't lose to you."

Ise-kun held Rias-neesan's hand.

"Me too. Rias, I will defeat you!"

Beside her, Koneko-chan also said to Ise-kun

"Even if it's Ise-senpai, I won't let you defeat Rias-neesama. Right, Gya-kun?"

"Of course! —Ise-senpai, since we'll have to fight, I'll fight head-on!"

Gasper-kun also fearlessly declared that to Ise-kun. Ise-kun replied delightedly

“Yeah, Gasper. That’s right, us Gremory males have to show our talents.”

I also frankly declared to Ise-kun

“Me too, Ise-kun. I’m also looking forward to a serious match against you from the bottom of my heart.”

I — am Rias Gremory’s sword. Even if the opponent standing in front of me is Ise-kun — I will still cut through him. Ise-kun thrust his fist towards my chest as he said

“Kiba, wait until that time. There’s no need to worry. —Fight me with your true skill!”

After we told each other our true thoughts, our rivals who have fought side by side with us gradually gathered together.

“It looks like we’re all here. Well well, it looks like this competition will become quite interesting.”

“Ufufu, I won’t lose. Rias, Ise-kun.”

“Rather than the [Rookies Four], it would be better to call this a competition between the elites of every faction.”

“Since you’re here to participate, that’s better than anything.”

Dulio-san, the Sitri team, Seekvaira Agares-san, Ikuse Tobio; the members of [DxD] had all gathered together. And then, the official announcement for the opening ceremony was broadcast.

<<The time has come. The Rating Game World Tournament, the opening ceremony of the [Azazel Cup] is now officially starting. Would the teams please—>>

Just like that, our short and long final high school life began with the opening ceremony of the World Tournament.

Notes

1. Council President and Club President respectively.
2. A multi-purpose squarish stadium in Tokyo’s Bunkyo Ward, with a width of approximately 216m.
3. Śakra goes by various names, such as Indra, The Heavenly Emperor, and Taishakuten.
4. The romanised Japanese names and their meanings respectively: Jikoku-ten (he who upholds the realm), Zōchō-ten (he who causes to grow), Kōmoku-ten (he who sees all), Bishamon-ten (he who hears everything).

Team Members

Note1: The value of the chess pieces is tournament standard hence it will generally be different to the “Evil Piece” standard.

Note2: Only the [Pawn] would be given the value of the chess pieces with the bracket 『』.

“Sekiryuutei of the Issei (Blazing Truth) ”
team’s tournament registration members

King	–––	Hyoudou Issei
Queen	–––	Bina Lessthan
Rook	–––	Rossweisse
Rook	–––	Unregistered
Knight	–––	Xenovia Quarta
Knight	–––	Shidou Irina
Bishop	–––	Asia Argento
Bishop	–––	Ravel Phoenix
Pawn『3』	–––	Bova Tannin
Pawn『5』	–––	Unregistered

“Rias Gremory”
team’s tournament registration members

King	–––	Rias Gremory
Queen	–––	Himejima Akeno
Rook	–––	Toujou Koneko
Rook	–––	Unregistered

Knight	———	Kiba Yuuto
Knight	———	Lint Selzan
Bishop	———	Gasper Vladi
Bishop	———	Valerie Tepes
Pawn『8』	———	Mister Black

“Hakuryuukou of the Morning Star”
team’s tournament registration members

King	———	Vali Lucifer
Queen	———	Fenrir
Rook	———	Gogmagog
Rook	———	(Current) Zhu Bajie
Knight	———	Arthur Pendragon
Knight	———	(Current) Sha Wujing
Bishop	———	Kuroka
Bishop	———	Le Fay
Pawn『5』	———	Bikou
Pawn『3』	———	Unregistered

Indra & Sun Wukong

“Hahaha, he really is one energetic little Devil da-ze. The Sekiryuutei. What a grand entrance. —It allowed me to enjoy this a bit, wouldn’t you say so, Wukong?”

“Hohoho, Heavenly Emperor-sama, we enjoy the last of our youth at old age.”

“And for this reason you’ve decided to bring the first-generation Zhu Bajie, the first-generation Sha Wujing, the Dragon King Yu-Long, and even the Nezha Prince into your team, despite having already decided that you were going to retire them. You really are going all-out considering that it is your last youth, right?”

“Compared to me, Heavenly Emperor-sama, you plan to have a decisive battle against the God of Destruction if you attain the victory prize, right?”

“Of course. However, there is also the possibility that those plans will be overthrown. Hahaha, you can laugh at me, first-generation. I may be a bit immature, but I want to enjoy stirring up some trouble.”

“I understand. My comrades and I are also passionate.”

“In the meantime, this will go according to Shiva’s and Ajuka’s plans. …However, perhaps the opponents in our mind will be close at hand even if we don’t attain victory.”

“Hohoho, when it’s been said by a God, that inevitably increases its authenticity by some degree.”

Life.5
Go, the Sekiryuutei Team!

Part I

Ten days had already passed since the beginning of the World Tournament—.

All of the members of the [Sekiryuutei of the Blazing Truth] team were gathered in the Hyoudou household — in the room that belonged to me, Hyoudou Issei. Everyone showed a bitter expression. All of us were watching the news program displayed on the television screen which was being broadcast from the Underworld. —The news program was introducing us. This section was introducing the events of the World Tournament that started not long ago, which is why there was also some commentary on us.

“The highly anticipated hope of the Underworld, the [Sekiryuutei of the Blazing Truth] team has a proud record of three straight wins since the beginning of the qualifying round, but they always seem to have their flaws and loopholes exposed by others during the competition, and this surprising outcome led to the emergence of disappointed opinions. Regardless of whether this is from the general public or critics, they have been on the receiving end of some harsh judgement—”

The video that was played back was of our situation during the matches. We had won three straight times to date, but…. In the recording of me that was shown, the opposing team had just revealed one of our flaws, causing us to receive an unexpected counterattack, so to be precise, we did not achieve total victories. For now, we have won matches against teams of Devils, human special ability users, and Orcs. The television program was playing back one of the areas where we did not perform well, and it was actually quite ridiculous. Playback of scenes where my attack missed, Xenovia was attacked from her blind spot, Irina was penalised for violating special rules, and so on were shown one by one. The cameras turned towards the general public who were in the audience. They also seemed to show complicated expressions on their faces.

“Since he’s had a very early promotion to become a High-class Devil, we’ve all been looking forward to a lot. After all, the [King] Princess Rias who allowed him to grow and develop truly is incredible.”

…Other teams had also been penalised for breaking the rules, and also appeared to have losses in a few aspects. My team was the only one to be presented in such a manner. The next section was an interview of a mother and her child. The child was holding a figurine of the ‘Oppai Dragon’ in its hands.

“My child is a fan of the ‘Oppai Dragon’, so we came together to cheer him on, but it feels as though every match is rather disorganised…. Watching the matches of the other young Devils is actually somewhat more comfortable.”

This time it was time for the child who was a fan of mine to speak—

“I want to say that the matches of the ‘Oppai Dragon’ don’t feel very interesting. That’s because if they’re not running all over the place, then they’re releasing super gigantic light beams. Also, the Oppai Dragon doesn’t even say oppai oppai.”

That really is some merciless criticism. …They specifically chose people who cared

about us, and then criticised us to such an extent. I really hate these media reporters. They even went as far as to show the criticism from the child…. The stream then returned back to the news room. The host was listening to the critics' opinions.

"Under ordinary rules, Hyoudou Issei-shi ''' relies on sheer power to suppress his opponents with light blasts, but under the special rules, his actions are actually unfavourable. It is evident that Hyoudou Issei-shi, who has attained various honours in actual combat does not actually have a very good understanding of the Rating Game as it is an entirely different thing."

The critic sighed, and then continued onwards.

"After all, he was formerly a player who was a symbol of strength for the Rias Gremory team that tends to rely on power to win. When put in the position of commander like this, it's no wonder that he is unfamiliar with the rules and is unable to adapt. Not to mention that the same power-type contestant Xenovia—"

Ravel simply switched the television off, without any intention of listening to the rest of the critic's opinion.

"Even if the situation is evident, it can't really be helped."

Xenovia said bitterly.

"…Are they planning to talk about my situation next?"

"Yes, it certainly is a very ruthless critique of us one after the other."

Irina also nodded silently. Ravel summarised what had just been stated on the television program.

"What they've said is the truth. But it won't help even if we concern ourselves with the public's evaluation of us. We need to cheer up. I believe I said this before the start of the qualifying round, in order to progress into the final group, the number of wins is not an absolute condition."

"The important thing is the number of points, right?"

Ravel nodded.

"In order to enter the finals of the tournament, we must be one of the top sixteen teams by the end of the qualifiers. Points are ordered from highest to lowest, we gain points by winning, and we lose points by losing. In other words, a high score is not equivalent to the number of matches. If we were to have losses and wins continuously, then we won't be able to obtain a high score."

Regardless of wins and losses, all that was needed was a high score at the end in order to enter the final sixteen. Before the tournament started, I spoke with Kiba and the others about this while we were simply chatting. Ravel continued

"Everyone is somewhat jumbled together at the beginning of the qualifiers. Scores are generally the same, so for the time being, there are a lot of people who are simply observing. The real difference should appear during the middle period. From then on, the higher-ranked teams will have a clear goal, and that's when the race

begins.”

Also, no matter if they win or lose, the number of wins of a powerful team will definitely continue to increase, and there will inevitably be a gap between them and the weaker teams. And the time when this becomes the most evident is at the halfway mark. Rossweisse-san took over as she continued

“Towards the latter half, there may be powerful teams that deliberately abstain from participating in matches.”

Ravel nodded in agreement.

“Because there are so many participating teams, it’s not easy to predict which team we may go up against. If we run into a difficult team and lose, then the points that we’d have accumulated up until then will fall. That’s why the score at that time will become the highest score of the team, and then all that’s left will be to sit and wait for the qualifiers to end. In the latter half, trying to squeeze into the final group from a low position will probably be very difficult.”

In other words, avoiding matches is also a strategy. Also, as long as we make it into the top sixteen, all we have to do is avoid any actions that will lower our points, moreover, our stamina isn’t limitless either. Ravel raised her index finger.

“The most important thing in this tournament is the time when our team should participate. It is impossible to keep our physical condition and momentum in the best possible condition throughout the entire competition period. So we need to look out for opportunities to break through during the qualifiers, and then build up all our points at once. Of course, if there are matches that we can avoid, then we should do so.”

We should avoid competing against the God-class beings who occupy the upper ranks. However, according to the rules of this tournament, if we run into them and have no other choice, then it’ll be important to take good care of the team’s overall state during that time. Ravel then turned the conversation towards me

“—Ise-sama, the idea of wanting to defeat everyone is impossible. From a social perspective, you should accept challenges from others, but your team has a limit, and if you accept every challenge, then the team will fall apart because it cannot cope. Remember that you shouldn’t allow your score to decline unnecessarily. The lives of the entire team have been entrusted to you as the [King], and deciding which is a suitable match is also the responsibility of the [King]. If the occasion arises where you must decline, please be determined to do so. The primary goal here is to enter the finals.”

My strategic advisor-sama truly has a perfect grasp of my psyche. I shrugged.

“Alright, I understand. Since everyone has entrusted their lives to me, I won’t do anything reckless. If I think that what lies ahead is not good, I also have the tolerance to step down and retreat. But — knowing that it is a match that we must face, running away and not facing it head on is not like me…and it’s not like us either, right?”

I asked my members. Xenovia folded her arms as she nodded firmly.

“As expected of Ise. That’s right, when we’re going to go, we should charge to the

end all at once.”

My [Pawn] who had been shrunk to a miniature size — Bova, seemed to have become so emotional that he shed tears.

“That’s right, my lord! Ooh, this is the very reason why I became a subordinate of the Sekiryuutei!”

This dragon always has a grateful look whenever I say anything or do anything, and acts like this as well…. When I was looking for members after I had just become a high-class Devil, he appeared before me. He lowered his head and begged me several times, simply because he wanted to fight with me. He didn’t ask to become one of my servants, he simply wished to become my subordinate. Since he had already said so much, it wouldn’t do any good to ignore him. Moreover, he’s also my great benefactor Tannin-ossan’s son, so it would also be rude of me to refuse. So he was not one of my servants, but simply a subordinate. —At that time, Irina raised a question.

“Speaking of which, our [Queen]…Bina-san doesn’t seem to have come, could it be that she is dealing with her usual work? If I remember correctly, she is a Devil?”

Xenovia then said

“Although I only know her through Ise’s introduction, she really is a figure surrounded by mystery. But she is certainly very strong.”

Indeed, our [Queen]…a Devil named Bina Lessthan is a masked woman. For some reason, she appeared before me, and also for various other reasons, she eventually became our [Queen]. Of course, she isn’t one of my servants, at most she would be one of my team members for this tournament. Rossweisse-san said with a bit of unease

“…I’ve only met her a few times, and I’ve also spoken with her a few times, but since I’m not clear on her true identity, I’ve been a bit uneasy…but she really does have experience with the Rating Games.”

Uh-huh. We met in late March — during that time, I was busy looking for team members. And it was early April when my peerage and team first met her. There is a secret underneath her mask. At present, the only person aside from me who knows her true identity — is Ravel.

“Her strength is real. After all, the three matches so far have been good proof of that.”

Just as Ravel said, Bina-shi’s ability among the members of my team was second to none. So far in the tournament, she’s been able to defeat her opponents, and unlike us, she hasn’t displayed any flaws as of yet. She defeats her opponents with minimal movements, and has not received any damage so far. Even on television—

“Regarding the Sekiryuutei team’s [Queen], that is, the masked player; her splendid battles are always quite stunning.”

Thus, she received a favourable and positive evaluation. Nonetheless, Bina-shi seems to be committed to being one of our team members until the end, so the final decision was always up to the team — or perhaps subject to my own judgement. In

April, I spoke with Ravel and Bina-shi about a variety of things. In the end, she basically left everything that was related to the competition to us. …After all, it seems like Bina-shi wants to see my qualities as a [King]…. As the meeting progressed, we also discussed other teams. Vali, Sairaorg-san, Sona-senpai, Dulio, Cao Cao, Ikuse-san and the others had all progressed smoothly and successfully. Seekvaira-san had encountered a God-class being as soon as she entered, and despite fighting until the end, she was still defeated. All that can be said is that she was unlucky, but this was all part of the format of this tournament. The God-class beings had basically won all of their matches, but there were still teams which had yet to participate. One of those was the Heavenly Emperor's team. Was this just for observation, or was it for….

The display finally showed Rias' team. Rias had also obtained several straight wins. Compared to us, she had won much more gracefully, and had also received a highly positive evaluation. Coupled with Rias' natural popularity, the media was presenting her in a favourable manner. Ravel said

"She really is impeccable. During this time, Rias-sama has continued to obtain victories, and has been steadily building up her score."

—At this point, the video stream cut over to show Valerie, who was treating an injured Koneko-chan in the midst of a game. A Holy Grail appeared, and liquid from within it was poured onto Koneko-chan's injury. After a brief moment, the wound had healed.

"…So Valerie is a healer huh."

Ravel nodded in response to the thought that I had spoken aloud.

"It looks like that's another way of using the [Sephiroth Grail][121]. Its characteristics can be changed and it can also be used without affecting the user."

…Simply by producing a cup, its adjustment ability made it possible to produce a liquid that was capable of restoring team members. In this tournament, unlike its predecessor, the Rating Games, the restoration item 'Phoenix Tears' are not provided. After all, as a result of Qlippoth's influence and the destruction caused by Trihexa, 'Phoenix Tears' had been distributed everywhere, thus it was not a situation in which more could be provided. They had been replaced with recovery points throughout the tournament venues, and one's injuries could be treated by going there. Irina said

"Unlike Asia, Valerie-san does not seem to have a high rate of recovery…but I believe she has a few other tricks up her sleeve."

Well, I also agreed with that. This was an ability that was originally related to life itself. Although its ability to heal other people was similar to Asia's, that was not its actual power—. Perhaps there was also something they were hiding from us? Oh—oh—, on the other hand, Gasper's Balor had easily sent a bulky opponent flying. It seems as though that guy has succeeded the role of the power representative since I left them.

"Speaking of which, this person in Master Rias' match is rather concerning."

Xenovia was focusing on a particular person in the Rias Team. —Indeed, after Xenovia seemed troubled for a moment, she eventually added 'Master' before Rias'

name. The person whom Xenovia was referring to was the new female swordsman who was a [Knight]. She had black and white streaked hair, and she was also dressed in the same battle suit that Xenovia and Irina wore as Church warriors. Asia said

“It’s Rias-oneesama’s swordsman…san huh. She’s the one who has replaced Xenovia as the team’s—”

“—Lint Selzan. Moreover, she does not appear to be a member of Rias-san’s peerage.”

Irina also looked at her thoughtfully. Speaking of which, her name is Selzan. Her face is actually quite similar to the face of that annoying guy in my memories. However, she doesn’t make any vulgar facial expressions like that guy did. It seems like she just resembles Freed a lot! Her combat style also involves wielding a gun and a sword. She wielded a sword imbued with the power of light, and also used a gun as she ran about during the match. Xenovia quietly murmured

“So she’s only a combatant for this tournament huh…Selzan. She and Freed should be related in some way.”

Irina nodded.

“When looking at her, she really is like…. Based on this footage of the match, she doesn’t seem to be as crazy as he was…. Xenovia, have you heard of her name during the time when you were still with the Church?”

In response to Irina’s question, Xenovia shook her head.

“No, including Freed, I hadn’t heard of them even once while I was still a Church warrior. …Could she possibly be from a secret division that has concealed her identity?”

“…Well, if I was to go to Heaven, I would probably be able to find some clues.”

Irina seemed to be just as worried as Xenovia was. After all, she seemed to be from one of the warrior training facilities, she wore the same type of battle suit, and her surname was also Selzan. It was only natural to feel concerned about her. I also couldn’t help feeling troubled by it. Even when I asked Rias, she replied to me with something along the lines of

“Ufufu, I won’t tell you about Lint. This is a team secret, so it would be bad if I let it slip out, you know?”

However, since even Rias was giggling when she replied to me like that, it was an indication that she wasn’t a particularly bad person…. Xenovia noticed something on the screen, and then pointed towards something on the television.

“Among other things, the sword of flames that this person is wielding…is purple.”

Irina also murmured

“Flames of purple…purple flames…is that how it can be considered?”

Ravel seemed to have done some prior research on it, and she gave us the report to read.

“The Vatican headquarters and the Grigori; these two factions have jointly handed her over to Rias-sama. …That is to say, it’s exactly the same as what you guys have guessed. That Longinus has selected its master, and it has now been transferred.”

This was the girl that the Vatican and the Grigori had both entrusted Rias with. Not only was she related to Freed, she also possessed — a sword of purple flames that originated from the Longinus [Incinerate Anthem][131].

“The deeper we go, the harder it is to believe her existence. Just who is this girl…”

Xenovia placed her hand against her chin and squinted her eyes as she spoke. Rossweisse-san then said

“Regardless of what her identity is, Rias-san’s team…could be described to already have the power of three Longinuses. If you leave aside the God-class beings, then she should be one of the leading teams in this tournament.”

Three Longinuses—. Even though Gasper’s Sacred Gear is treated as a special case, it has also been recognised as being in the same class as a Longinus.

“I heard that there is also another member present…but they haven’t participated in any matches yet.”

I said. According to her registration, Rias’ team also has a new member as a [Pawn]. And as Rias’ original [Pawn], I was rather worried about this. Ravel then said

“All we know at the moment is the name that was used during the registration process. …[Mr. Black]-san. I believe that is most likely a pseudonym. Because of the rules of this tournament, a [Pawn] with eight pieces on its own is a major threat. I wonder if it’s someone that rivals a God-class being’s power, or is perhaps even a god themselves…”

—They had a value of eight pieces in this tournament. Even if they were limited by the value of the [Pawn] piece, having eight pieces meant that they were incredibly strong, right…? Has Rias dragged in even the power of a god into her team? This was truly remarkable. Irina also said

“A god in Rias-san’s team…. Rias-san is also the core of [DxD]. If she extended an invitation, I wonder if a god would accept…”

But Xenovia expressed her doubt on this.

“So this is the substitute for Ise? Ise has forced Rizevim into a corner, defeated the Heavenly Dragon-class Apophis, and fought against Trihexa’s core in the Evil Dragon War. Even a god wouldn’t be able to casually accept an invitation to replace Ise.”

I felt honoured to receive such praise…but, was it really that hard to find a replacement for me? Would I be used for comparison? Well — hmm. Rossweisse-san also nodded in agreement with Xenovia’s opinion.

“I also agree with Xenovia-san. Ise-kun has now become a [King], but he is still Rias-san’s [Pawn]. Even if it’s only for this tournament, I find it hard to believe that there are gods who would readily accept being judged like this…. After all, the entire world will be comparing them to Ise-kun.”

Unless they were up against a powerful opponent, Mr. Black would not come out to fight. Perhaps I'll just look forward to that time then. …Perhaps he's the kind that doesn't care about looking forward to things, or perhaps that guy is just ridiculously strong. At that time, the program changed scenes to show Kiba instead. Kiba relied on his prided speed and swordsmanship to instantly cut down his opponents. In the footage that was played back, there was not a single person who was able to catch up to Kiba, let alone attack him. A few days before the tournament began, Kiba said to me

"I — swear that I will remain Rias-neesan's [Knight] for my entire life. Before you, I had already been recognised as Rias-neesan's [Knight]. So, now that you have your own team…from this point onwards, you and I are rivals. Even if you and I are friends, if we happen to fight, I will not hesitate to stand before you as Rias-neesan's sword."

Before I could say anything else, my friend Kiba continued

"Ise-kun, at that time, we'll both show off our true skill! —Being able to have a serious fight with you, that is something I look forward to!"

…Kiba, if I really have to fight against you or Rias…I will definitely stand up for an honest showdown. I definitely won't lose to you guys!

"—Ise-sama, Ise-sama."

Ravel pulled me back from my reminiscence of Kiba.

"Ah, oh, what is it?"

Ravel sighed.

"Really, please focus. Ise-sama is our [King], right? Even if I can give you advice, the final decision still rests in your hands."

Hahaha, our manager-sama really is strict. She actually became even stricter after becoming one of my peerage members. But this is all for my sake, so I'm counting on you, Ravel. At that time, a knocking sound reverberated over from the door. After answering, the people who came in were — Le Fay and Kunou, as well as Lilith.

"U-Umm, has your meeting concluded yet?"

Le Fay asked us nervously. She was holding a tray in her hands, on top of which was some tea.

"Oh, it's Le Fay. I was just looking for a time to take a break. Everyone, is that alright?"

When I asked, everyone smiled as they nodded. Upon seeing this, Kunou took the red tea that was on the tray and served it to everyone.

"Please have some tea, Ise."

"Oh, thank you Kunou. But, uh Lili — no, Lith."

Whilst I wasn't paying attention, Lilith sat down on my lap again. It seems that aside from Koneko-chan, the people who compete for my lap are increasing, with Ravel

and Lilith now among them as well. By the way, Lilith has now been entrusted to us. Because we previously had taken care of Ophis, it naturally became the case that the Hyoudou residence became the default place for keeping someone hidden. And precisely because of this, the Ophis (Lilith) who was being controlled by Qlippoth was proclaimed to have disappeared during the battle. But going back to the main point, like Ophis' name, Lilith's name couldn't be exposed in front of Kunou, so it was shortened to Lith. Either way, the name isn't too different.

"Cake cake."

The Lilith on my lap seemed interested in the cake on the tray, and after receiving a portion from Ravel, she began to eat it in big mouthfuls. Just like Ophis, she seemed to be a big eater. The cake that Ravel had prepared for everyone was a chocolate cake.

"I also prepared a cake for everyone, so please enjoy it."

So it was Ravel who personally baked it. While Kunou tasted the cake (the edges of her mouth were stained with chocolate), she said

"That's right, constantly talking about difficult topics will only cause your brain to slow down, so we should rest a little!"

Although she said that, it was really just to vent the fact that she was unable to play with us, which is why she found an excuse to come over to us. Hahaha, Kunou really is cute.

"Le Fay, Kunou, have you gotten used to school life?"

I asked the two of them.

"Of course! I immediately made friends! I didn't think the people here were so easy to converse with."

Indeed, Kunou didn't come to the Occult Research Club after school sometimes, so she was probably playing with her friends at those times. That was good, it was good to hear that she was able to make friends. Le Fay said with a calm expression

"For me, high school life is a new starting point, and although there are a lot of areas that I'm unfamiliar with…it's all very fresh to me, so I'm enjoying it."

I then asked about the Vali team's situation.

"How about the Vali team?"

"After the new team members, the current Sha Wujing-san and the current Zhu Bajie-san joined our team, we immediately headed into a match, so it was a bit overwhelming."

Indeed, the new members of the Vali team were the current 'Sha Wujing' and the current 'Zhu Bajie'. I had also only just heard about it this Winter, and had also met the two of them. The first-generation old man Sun Wukong said that he wanted to train the two of them for the sake of inheriting the positions of 'Sha Wujing' and 'Zhu Bajie'; thus he entrusted them to Vali. They were supposedly reserve members…but it looks like they've become part of the official team for the tournament. A

contemporary Journey to the West combination had been formed within Vali's team, and it would really be worth watching if they went up against the first-generation's team. I then asked Kunou.

"It seems that there are also Youkai participating in the game?"

"Uh-huh. From each of the leaders, three teams have been elected to participate in the tournament. Kyoto also has three teams. The team to which the strongest member in each area belongs is said to be strong enough to act as the leader's representative. Ise and you guys, if you encounter them, you definitely can't be careless, okay?"

Kunou said that whilst eating, but at that time, the door was opened once again.

"I, appear."

The one who had arrived was Ophis. But, she wasn't in her adult form, rather, it was the girl version of Ophis. Upon seeing that someone had arrived, Kunou also welcomed them.

"Oh, Phis-dono! Have you returned from the shrine on the rooftop[141]?"

"Sunbathing, done."

Oh, from time to time, Ophis goes to the miniature shrine that was built specifically for her on the rooftop. She really likes sunbathing up there. Everyone here also goes there occasionally to visit, and puts some money into the donation box. This is treated as pocket money for Ophis to spend. I looked at Ophis, and muttered quietly.

"…I didn't think that it was possible to revert back to this appearance."

It was exactly as I said. In order to save me, Ophis' figure and many other factors had been restricted, but…. Irina quietly told me

(This is a specially-made change that was done so that Kunou-san isn't surprised. Also, I usually find this appearance to be more calming.)

A change huh. A body transformation into a loli. Kunou would indeed be very surprised if she saw an adult version of Ophis. We were also more accustomed to her current appearance. Seeing Ophis and Lilith stand side by side — it was really hard not to laugh. Including Kunou, this was kawaii times three!

"…Also, having Ophis and Lilith stand together like this makes it feel as though nothing is out of place."

Just while I was in the midst of talking to myself as I watched this laughable scene, a magic communications circle next to Ravel's ear was deployed.

"Ara, it's a message from the tournament's coordinators."

Oh, it's a message from the tournament.

"—Hmm. We were so immersed in our discussion that we even forget about the pairing."

Ravel quickly took out a tablet, and then logged on to the organiser's site. What was

shown there was — the date of our next scheduled match, and our opponent.

“…The opposing team for our next match has already been decided.”

We were all surprised upon seeing it! Ravel said

“—The team’s name is [Lightning]. An entry from the Grigori…and the [King] is Barakiel-sama.

…This was the international tournament that all kinds of people had returned to compete in…! The incident that had occurred at this very moment in time finally allowed me to grasp an understanding of it; this kind of confrontation was even more realistic than I had expected! I didn’t think that I would be matched against someone we were familiar with so soon! We had encountered our first major obstacle.

Part 2

After we confirmed our opponent for the next match, we went downstairs to lighten our mood. We happened to run into a familiar person speaking with Akeno-san in the living room on the first floor. The person who had come here was a well-built man — it was Barakiel-san!

“…Ah, Barakiel-san!”

I never imagined that I would come face to face with the man himself right after reading the announcement! Barakiel-san also noticed me.

“Hyoudou Issei-kun.”

Based on his tone of voice, it was evident that he knew that he would be facing us in the next match, and Akeno-san also seemed to know, and the atmosphere suddenly became quiet. I steadied my breathing, and then sat down on a nearby sofa.

“Did you come to see Akeno-san?”

“Yes, there were a few things that I wanted to ask about university life. But, speaking of which—”

Barakiel-san dove straight into the main topic right after the greetings were over.

“In the next match, my opponent will be you. Let’s both give it all we have. As a representative of the Grigori, I will do my best to enjoy this match.”

“Yes, I feel the same, I'm looking forward to it.”

Both of us were passionate men, who also stood as the mutual leaders of our own teams, so our competitive spirit towards each other was naturally beginning to leak out. However, Akeno-san was looking at me and Barakiel-san alternately with a troubled expression.

“Ara ara, Ise-kun actually has to compete against father…I don’t know which side I should cheer for.”

Barakiel-san asked his own daughter with a hint of shyness.

“…A-Akeno, if you could only cheer for one side…which side would you support?”

That was the facial expression of an expectant father! I couldn’t help thinking of the time when Barakiel-san cried at the graduation ceremony! As a parent, he was absolutely looking forward to hearing that his own adorable daughter was going to root for him! Akeno-san! Under such circumstances, you should cheer for your dad! I sent this suggestion to Akeno-san in my mind! Just think, if Akeno-san chooses me, then Barakiel-san will—.

“That’s right, let me think…”

After Akeno-san seemed troubled for a moment, a mischievous smile emerged on her face, and she then pressed her body towards me — she tightly embraced me.

“Of course, it’s Ise-kun ♪”

“……Uhh!”

It looked like Barakiel-san had taken a serious blow to his heart right in front of me! It had already gotten to the point that his eyeballs were popping out of his eye sockets, and several blue veins also emerged on his temple! Barakiel-san had become so angry that he couldn’t help trembling! His face was also unnervingly scary! With his finger pointed at me, he furiously shouted!

“Argh, you! I definitely won’t lose to you in the match, you Oppai Dragooon!”

After saying that, Barakiel-san ran off in tears! …Aaaaahhh, my rapport with the opposing team’s leader has just collapsed right before the match! He’ll definitely come at me with 120% of his strength in the match! Upon seeing this, an impish smile appeared on Akeno-san’s face.

“Ufufu, father, you’re too adorable.”

Akeno-san, you’re making fun of your dad again…. However, Akeno-san suddenly revealed a sorrowful expression.

“…But, in reality, my feelings are complicated. Regardless of whether it’s Ise-kun or father, I want you both to win. But, since you’re opponents, a victor will have to be decided…. Although there is the possibility of a draw…neither Ise-kun nor father wishes for this outcome.”

“Yeah, a winner will have to be decided since we’re competing against each other. A winner will need to be decided regardless of whether it’s Barakiel-san’s team, or Rias’ team…”

I gave a serious reply to Akeno-san. Since we were contenders, even if it was Barakiel-san, and even if it was a relative of Akeno-san, we still needed to win. If this wasn’t the case, I wouldn’t have any reason to form my own team. —Since I’ve decided to fight, I will aim for victory no matter what. This was our goal! Akeno-san’s face blushed slightly, and she continued to stare at me…. All of a sudden, Akeno-san said

“…Truly, I envy Rias. She has such a strong man who can say that he wants to stay together with her forever…”

Before Akeno-san could finish what she was saying, she said “It’s time for me to talk to Rias, I have to go.” and then exited the living room. I wonder if I should have said that to Akeno-san today. No, it isn’t a question of whether I should or not, it’s something that I must say. But it was somewhat disappointing that I couldn’t say it now…. …Akeno-san, in fact, I always—.

Part 3

And so, it was now the day of the game. The place we were going to was in the Underworld — the new stadium that was built in the Fallen Angels' territory for the tournament. There was already a swarm of people within.

The name of the stadium was 'Azazel Stadium', and a bronze statue of Azazel-sensei had also been erected at the entrance. And right in the centre of the stadium were — the two teams who stood within the field. The opposing team's [King] was Barakiel-san, and their [Queen] was also a Cadre of the Grigori—.

"Griiiiigoriiiiiiiiii! Long time no see, Oppai Dragoooon—! Guhahahahaha!"

This unique manner of speech belonged to the Cadre of special effects, Armaros-san! I never imagined that this person would participate in the tournament, and as a member of Barakiel-san's team as well! Although the other members were not Cadres, they were all high-ranking Fallen Angels who had survived a countless number of fierce battles. Just like us, the [Lightning] team had not suffered any losses so far. During the period when both teams stared off at each other, the announcer and guest commentator began their explanations over the microphone.

<<Today's match is the centre of attention, the highly anticipated [Sekiryuutei of the Blazing Truth] team versus the [Lightning] team! Both teams are powerful competing teams from the Three Factions, and everyone is simply holding their breath to see what will unfold in this match! Our guest commentator is from the Devils' side, Princess Rias Gremory's father! Well then, Gremory-kyo[151], thank you very much for being with us today.&rt;&rt;

I didn't expect that the guest commentator would actually be Rias' dad! Moreover, today was also our match against Akeno-san's dad, Barakiel-san; it seems like fathers are present wherever we go today!

<<No no, it is my pleasure, thank you for having me. From a personal perspective, I do want to cheer for my daughter's fiancé, Hyoudou Issei-kun, but I will provide a serious commentary for everyone today.&rt;&rt;

Rias' father politely greeted the audience. Say, he actually said 'fiancé' during that commotion!? Did he already hear about the oath that I made to Rias about our future, or was that something he just said in the spur of the moment!? The announcer began to explain today's rules.

<<The format of this match is [Object Break]! The team which destroys the most target objects in the game field within the time limit wins! Also, as with the previous rules, the entire field will be divided into different areas, just like a chessboard.&rt;&rt;

A chessboard-like area appeared on the enormous display screen. As soon as the match starts, we will be transported into the dedicated battlefield, and begin our fight there. We will not actually be fighting inside this stadium. The field was tremendously vast, and even if a Devil had to fly from one side straight to the other at full speed, it would take nearly thirty minutes. But depending on my position and situation on the field, I could fly from one end of the field to the other in a matter of minutes? The

announcer continued to explain the rules

<<A total of thirteen [objects] have been prepared within the game field! As long as one team finds and destroys more [objects] than the other team within the twelve hour time limit, they will be declared the winner! Of course, and needless to say, the other rules of this tournament are still in effect, so defeating the other team's [King] also results in a victory.&rt;&rt;

I had heard about the rules for counting the number of destroyed [objects] beforehand.

<<Going by a simple calculation, as long as either side destroys more than half of the [objects], in other words, the first team to destroy seven [objects] will be declared the winner, and the game will end there.&rt;&rt;

…Although fighting was also important, finding and destroying the [objects] was the top priority.

<<Some of the prepared [objects] have been placed in the field in their original state, whilst some are in less noticeable positions, and some possibly even hidden in obscure places. The two teams will have to race through this broad field, and whilst the players are fighting each other, they must also find these [objects] and destroy them.&rt;&rt;

Now then, I wonder where these things are hidden…. Supposedly, the shape of these [objects] will be revealed to us at the beginning of the game.

<<In addition, if the twelve hour time limit is exceeded, and both teams have destroyed the same number of [objects], the match will be determined to be a draw.&rt;&rt;

It's possible for a draw huh. But, all that lay on my mind was the thought of victory.

<<There have been similar matches in the Rating Games of the Underworld in the past; even when a lower ranked team with a large power gap between a higher ranked team are set against each other, lower ranked teams have been able to destroy an equal number of items to the other team, and then engage in a defensive battle until time runs out to successfully draw a tie. This subversion of expectations and the plethora of limitless possibilities is one of the charms of this game.&rt;&rt;

…In terms of strength, the outside world may have always believed that we were more dominant, but according to these rules, we also had the possibility of facing defeat. Rias' father said

<<In other words, it is sometimes the case that neither of the two teams can find all of the [objects] within the allocated time limit.&rt;&rt;

<<Well, nominally speaking, because the [objects] are placed randomly, there may be rare situations in which they cannot be found. This would result in an unexpected scenario, and some teams may give up on searching, and choose instead to defeat the opposing team. Of course, if the [objects] in a field can be easily located, it is more likely that we will see an early destruction of the [objects] rather than an attempt to defeat the opposing team.&rt;&rt;

In other words, if the game progressed into the latter half, we may as well switch our

strategy to defeat the opposing team, rather than continue to search for these [objects].

<<One point to add is that after an [object] is destroyed, special rules will apply to the area in which it appeared. The [King] of each team cannot enter that area. In other words, as the game progresses, and as [objects] continue to be destroyed, the areas in which a [King] can move around in are gradually reduced. How the two teams will consider and integrate this into their strategy as they move is also one of the highlights of this game.&rt;&rt;

<<This means that as the battle continues, the [King] will be left with nowhere to escape to at the end.&rt;&rt;

—In this way, the announcer and Rias' father thoroughly explained the rules of the game in detail. …The last rule meant that the [King] would not be able to enter an area where an [object] had been destroyed, which was going to be troublesome. Standing beside me, Ravel whispered

"I have something that I need to confirm."

"What is it?"

"—It's whether an [object] can be moved or not."

…Whether an [object] can be moved huh. Ravel continued

"Based on the [objects] prepared in the previous [Object Break] games, there have been both stationary and moveable ones. If there happen to be moveable [objects] this time, it will become somewhat tricky."

If they can be moved, then it will indeed be trickier, so it was necessary to confirm this fact.

"So, when we encounter an [object], we need to confirm whether or not it can be moved first."

I responded to Ravel's strategy.

<<Now, the game will begin right away! After both teams are transported, and have confirmed the shape of the [objects], the game will begin!&rt;&rt;

The announcer's words encouraged the audience to heat up, and we were then wrapped in the light of teleportation magic—.

Part 4

After we were transported, what appeared before our eyes was — a vast natural environment. There were towering mountains spreading out around us. There was also a lake not too far from the forest of trees. By the looks of it, a mountainous terrain had been used as a template for this field. In one particular corner — stood a steep cliff where our base camp was situated on top of. A table and a set of chairs had been prepared atop the cliff. A full map was laid out across the table. Just like a chessboard, it was set out in an eight by eight grid, with a single line drawn across the middle separating the north and south sides. The northern half was the opposing side's territory, whilst the southern side was ours. We also confirmed the location of the 'recovery points', with each side having one. Then, a projection from the table showed a three-dimensional image of the [object]. The [object] was — a statue of a woman with the wings of both a Fallen Angel and a Devil. …The [object] inevitably reminded me of Akeno-san. —At that time, the field resounded with ring of a bell to signal the beginning. Most likely, after both we and our opponents had confirmed the shape of the [objects], they announced the opening. And like that, the game began. Ravel cleared her throat as she said

"—Well, everyone. I will now begin to explain our strategy."

While we listened to our strategic advisor Ravel's instructions, we began to prepare for the game—.

One and a half hours had passed since the beginning of the game. I had been instructed to explore the western side of our territory. Bova also came along with me to explore the west. Speaking of which, because the field was so vast, there were places that weren't possible to see with the naked eye. Well, as I flew in the air overlooking all that was below, I couldn't find anything that appeared similar. Sometimes I would descend into the shade of the trees and into the valleys, and I would even check out the river occasionally, but still came up empty handed. After all, we were not told of how large the target item actually was. Without knowing what its size was, if it was a small object, it'd be even more troublesome. In the end, I wonder if it's possible to find the number required to win ahead of our opponent…. Just at that moment—. An announcement was broadcast across the entire field.

<<Confirmation that the [Lightning] team has destroyed an [object]. They have gained one point.&rt;&rt;

—What! They've taken the lead!

<<Whoa! The first [object] has been destroyed! This action has come from the Grigori's [Lightning] team! But the game is still in progress, which side will be the ones to destroy the next [object]!?&rt;&rt;

A calm message from Ravel reached my ears.

"Please do not get impatient. They have simply taken one point."

…Although that was the case, and my mind was clear, I couldn't help trying to speed

up. …Ah, no, I can't. If I did that, it would be a dereliction of my duty as the [King]. I had to calm my own emotions. Ravel, who was in charge of our strategic command, as well as Asia, who was our healer, remained at our base camp…in an inconspicuous area not too far from it. Since it was dangerous to stay in an unguarded base camp, they had hidden in a more discreet location. Given the possibility that there could be an [object] nearby, Asia summoned the four Evil Dragon brothers to search. —Good news suddenly arrived at my ears.

"This is Xenovia. —I've found an object. It's roughly thirty centimetres in size."

It was communication from Xenovia who had gone to explore the eastern side of our base camp. Ooh, we've actually found one! Ravel said

"Understood. Please confirm whether you can move it before destroying it."

"…It can be moved. Ravel, Ise, what now?"

Ravel responded

"Since it can be moved, we'll need to change our strategy for this game. We won't destroy it, but we'll keep it as a weapon of our side."

"…We'll move it first, and then destroy it in a location that will be favourable to us."

I said. Since it was moveable, we'd do just that. As a last resort, it could be used as a weapon when fighting against their [King]. After all, carrying something that was just 30 centimetres in size was rather convenient. Ravel reaffirmed my statement.

"Indeed. This can be treated as a weapon against their [King]. The way these [objects] are used will change the direction of the entire game."

Rossweisse-san said through the communications channel

"Given that's the case, perhaps our opponents have already found other [objects], and destroyed one, but are holding on to the rest of them, waiting for the right time to use them."

"T-They shouldn't have gotten their hands on three of them already, right…?"

Irina (responsible for searching the eastern side) nervously asked. Ravel replied

"Given the vast extent of the field, it should be impossible to have three, unless they were extremely lucky. However, the probability that they've found two is quite high. But taking into account these small possibilities, for now, we should act as though the other side have already captured three."

"So what about this one? Should I destroy it? Or should I keep it?"

Xenovia asked Ravel.

"In my opinion, this one should be saved. Finding the second one as soon as possible is the most important thing. What do you think, Ise-sama?"

"Yes, hold onto it first. Let's continue to find more of these target items and so that we can go ahead advantageously."

As long as they don't get stolen, and we hold onto them safely, we could destroy

them all at the right time. After all, we weren't clear on what the other side was planning, so it was best to hold onto them for now.

"After Xenovia-sama and Rossweisse-sama regroup, please analyse the [object]. Rossweisse-sama, I'm leaving things up to you then."

""Understood.""

Upon hearing Ravel's instructions, both Xenovia and Rossweisse-san responded. Rossweisse could use magic to analyse the [object], and then formulate a technique to search the field for them; this was our plan. If successful, then we would easily be able to find all of them. Rossweisse-san said

"Analysis of the [object] and creating a searching technique will take a significant amount of time. …And it may also be unusable for people who are not familiar with searching techniques."

I'm exactly the type who can't use it! I'm sorry that I'm not good at techniques! Anyway, aside from myself, there are a lot of people who aren't good at searching techniques either, moreover, the reincarnated Angel Irina is also present, so coming up with a technique that was compatible with everyone would take a lot of time. Ravel used a direct channel to me only to confirm our strategy.

"Ise-sama, regarding the 'check' we talked about earlier…I'll contact you after watching the combat situation for a while."

"Yeah, when that time comes, I'll go all out."

Ravel told us about the strategy immediately after the game began. It was truly bold, and truly fearless. But, I was also very fond of it. …I would wait until that time, and then I would let Barakiel-san and the audience bear witness to it. Ravel issued instructions to Bova.

"Bova-san, please transform into a miniature dragon form from time to time so that you can sneak into the opponent's territory and scope out the situation. If there are any changes, please let me know. However, please do not go too far."

"Understood."

Completely ignoring the opponent's position was also very dangerous. The next two and a half hours were spent exploring. After Irina had located another [object] on the eastern side, she destroyed it.

<<Confirmation that the [Sekiryuutei] team has destroyed an [object]. They have gained one point.&rt;&rt;

Immediately after we destroyed it, we heard an announcement that Barakiel-san's team also destroyed one—.

<<Confirmation that the [Lightning] team has destroyed an [object]. They have gained one point.&rt;&rt;

…It was obvious that they were provoking us. They had already obtained a few of them? Our original plan was caught up in such thoughts. But as soon as we destroyed one, our opponents also followed by destroying one. So after about ten

minutes, a message came from Irina.

“This is Irina! I’m being attacked by the opponent!”

—What! They’ve started attacking!

“Please engage them, and try to find out what they’re up to at the same time.”

Ravel immediately gave instructions.

“This is Bina. I am also being attacked.”

Another area was also being attacked! Bina-shi and Rossweisse-san had both been ordered to explore the central area of our territory. Both our central and eastern sides were being attacked at the same time! I didn’t expect that we would shift from search mode to attack mode before even half of our time limit had passed! What was their intention!? They definitely had some kind of tactic going on here! Just while I was thinking about that, a sudden flash of light appeared in my field of view! I quickly evaded, and although I had avoided my opponent’s attack…. But that just now was — lightning! I looked towards the person who had attacked me — it was Barakiel-san!

“…I didn’t imagine that I’d encounter you. This must be fate.”

…I didn’t expect that the person to attack the western side would be Barakiel-san! Not to mention the fact that this developed into a battle between the [Kings]. I immediately equipped my crimson armour. Let alone my ordinary Balance Breaker, after that Evil Dragon War, I could now also equip my [True Queen] form immediately. And not only that, my strength had also been increased due to influence of Dragon Deification. Even if my opponent was Barakiel-san, I wouldn’t be at a disadvantage.

<<Wow! A battle between [Kings] has suddenly kicked off right now! We’ve really been caught off guard, Gremory-kyo!&rt;&rt;

<<This is really something to look forward to. He is my daughter’s fiancé, fiancé, you know? Fufufu, he really looks handsome while wearing armour.&rt;&rt;

Rias’ dad!? What are you saying!? Don’t keep firing off the word fiancé just like that! You’re making me feel embarrassed! I can’t even focus on fighting!

“Let’s go!”

Even if I asked, Barakiel-san simply wasn’t going to wait for me; rays of lightning burst forth from his hands, and he continuously fired them towards me! I continuously evaded his attacks in the air. The bolts of lightning which missed struck a corner of the field, generating an enormous explosion! His power was truly extraordinary. Although I’ve recently had to fight against people who were stronger than me, Barakiel-san’s strength was not to be underestimated. Whilst evading the bolts of lightning and closing our distance at the same time, I was able to enter into a melee battle, which I was best at. Barkaiel-san easily dodged my punches, and I was struck by one of his punches in return. Although I had been hit squarely by a solid punch, it didn’t carry enough power. This was all thanks to having fought against those strong opponents so many times. —Even if I was fighting against Barakiel-san in melee combat, I still had an advantage over him! I began to go on a rampage against

Barakiel-san in mid-air. Sometimes I would close our distance, and sometimes I would pull away from him. We continued our battle like that in mid-air. In the midst of our fight against each other, Barakiel-san suddenly asked me a question.

“Hyoudou Issei-kun! —Regarding Akeno, I have something to ask you!”

“W-Why does it have to be right now!?”

“It has to be right now!”

Asking something about Akeno-san right now!? You can’t be serious! What’s happening to today’s game!?

“You — how far have you gotten with Akeno!?”

Barakiel-san asked me with absolute seriousness.

“Ah…! W-Well, that…!”

It’s hard to say! It’s very hard to say! This morning as well, she approached me in bed completely naked! Although it didn’t happen, I did feel her oppai!

“Why aren’t you saying anything!? C-Could it be that you’ve already reached the point where it’s unspeakable…!?”

Barakiel-san was trembling!

“N-No! I-It hasn’t yet…!”

I quickly retorted! What kind of situation is this! Barakiel-san charged at me with his fist raised in the air!

“Are you holding hands together!? Dating…I’ve seen it…!”

Ah, he saw us on our date! When Loki attacked us last year, Akeno-san and I accidentally went to a street full of love hotels and happened to be seen! At that time, I was so embarrassed that I didn’t know what to do! Barakiel-san then continued asking!

“S-Ss…!”

“Ss!?”

I asked in return, and with a downtrodden expression, Barakiel-san asked me

“—Have you kissed!?”

—Kiss. He was asking about kissing…? W-Well, that’s something we’ve done before. We had a very long and wet one before the graduation ceremony….

“…Y-Yes.”

After I gave an honest answer to him—.

“—!”

Barakiel-san was shocked. His body stiffened up in mid-air, and he began to cry manly tears….

“…U-Umm, Barakiel-san…?”

I nervously asked him…. Dark clouds began to appear above Barakiel-san’s head, and the sound of thunder began to rumble. With thunderclouds in the background, a dangerous gleam appeared in Barakiel-san’s eyes as he said to me

“……You’ve already gotten to that stage, so if y-you don’t take responsibility, as a father, I can’t rest assured!”

“Responsibility!? R-Responsibility as in!?”

“Do you even need to ask this type of question!? A young man and woman have kissed! You must take responsibility for this!”

What responsibility!? Because of a kiss!? Then what about what lies beyond it… touching her oppai! I have to take responsibility just for a kiss!? Barakiel-san’s entire body was clad in lightning! It was an unimaginable aura! —I hadn’t seen this kind of power even in the battle against Loki! I-Is it because of his daughter that his wrath and jealously towards me has arisen!? Clad in lightning, Barakiel-san charged directly towards me! Even if I was able to dodge his fist, the shock of the lightning would be transmitted to me through my armour. My entire body would be paralysed by it! It’d be bad if I was hit by a direct attack! After all, light is a deadly poison for Devils! Barakiel-san’s power of light combined with lightning — it would be dangerous if I was hit by that lightning! I began to retort as I countered his attacks.

“Umm, I heard from Azazel-sensei before that Barakiel-san is also a very erotic person!?”

“That’s…that!”

“Avoiding the topic!? It’s just like this!”

I heard very clearly that he used to do SM play with his late wife! E-Even I have not set foot into that territory! Barakiel-san used his lightning to form a long spear!

“As things are now, I must test you as Akeno’s father! With this, let me have a good test of how compatible you are with my daughter!”

Like this, the battle between the two [Kings] became more and more complicated! I transformed my right arm into its Welsh Dragonic Rook form as I attacked, but Barakiel-san retaliated fearlessly. Even if I increased our distance and used Dragon Shot, Barakiel-san would fire off an enormous lightning bolt at me. But whether it was for better or for worse, I had fought against several legendary existences. Barakiel-san was finally struck by one of my direct attacks, and was knocked backwards. Barakiel-san panted in deep breaths as he wiped away fresh blood from the edge of his mouth with his hand.

“…As expected of you. So this is how strong you are…. As expected of someone that Azazel trained.”

Indeed, it’s all thanks to Azazel-sensei that I was able to become this strong. Barakiel-san smiled as he said

“With strength alone, the present me can no longer defeat you. —But, this is a Rating Game.”

Barakiel-san raised his right hand, stretched out a finger, and released a single bolt of lightning towards the sky. After that, Barakiel-san retreated. Just when I chased him in order to reach an outcome for our battle…. An urgent message came from Ravel just a second later.

“Ise-sama! There are three of the opposing team’s players coming towards you! Moreover, they’re all — holding [objects]. —What! What happened!? Did the lightning that Barakiel-san released into the sky have this kind of purpose? Because of that, three opponents with [objects] are approaching me now! Could it be that they want to destroy those [objects] in front of me? I couldn’t understand what their plan was at all — but I immediately saw a change in the scenery in front of me. Some kind of barrier appeared to be forming—. Barakiel-san was on the other side of the barrier. Precisely because it was a barrier, although it was only as thick as a layer of skin, it separated Barakiel-san and me apart. At the same time, an announcement was made.

<<Confirmation that the [Lightning] team has destroyed three [objects]. They have gained three points.&rt;&rt;

—Three! If that’s the case, then they’ve already destroyed five of them! Regardless of that, what was this barrier in front of me!?

“T-This is…!?”

Because of the change that had occurred before me, I couldn’t help but feel surprised, while Barakiel-san calmly said

“—This is the area change because [objects] have been destroyed. The announcer should have mentioned this as well at the beginning of the game. If an [object] is destroyed—”

The area in which an [object] is destroyed — a [King] cannot enter!

“Speaking in terms of a chessboard, you are currently on the edge of [B1]. I am in [C2], and the areas that we cannot enter are [A3], [B2], and [C1], which form a perfect diagonal line. Which means that since you are in [B1], you cannot go past this diagonal line.”

“This was your plan from the beginning!?”

Since I was on the far side at [B1] and I couldn’t enter the area that was divided by the diagonal line, the only three areas that I was able to move around in now were [A1], [A2], and [B1]. It also meant that I was no longer able to move into any other area. They had cleverly chosen the areas that couldn’t be entered so as to form a barrier, without a single gap! Barakiel-san continued

“In fact, meeting you here was purely coincidence…. But this is the outcome that I obtained. …We were aiming for this when we thought about where to place the [objects]. It just so happened that you and I fought against each other, and I thought that it was time to implement this plan, so I contacted my teammates. The plan was originally to lure the [King] into one of the four corners of the field, and then use the rule that a [King] cannot enter the areas where an [object] has been destroyed to create this barrier. There have been teams in the [Object Break] games of the past that also used this tactic. —This strategy is known as [Imprisonment].

— [Imprisonment]!

True to its meaning, I was now trapped in the area of these three squares! Barakiel-san's attitude took a sudden turn, and he became rather cold.

"By mentioning Akeno, you became confused and I was able to implement this strategy. It was to prevent you from noticing that you were being lured into a corner. As expected, you were confused by my words and didn't take notice of our intentions at all. I said it just earlier, it was a test for you. Brute strength on its own is not enough, being able to face various circumstances on your own is also necessary. It'll be a worry if the man that my daughter likes is an idiot."

…….

…Damn it! Because he brought up Akeno-san, I was completely fooled…. I completely fell for it! But, my team won't be taken down so easily.

<< Of the [Lightning] team, one [Knight] and one [Bishop] have retired; three [Pawns] have also retired.&rt;&rt;

When it came to combat, it seems like my team has the advantage, as demonstrated by that announcement.

"Ise! Although we don't know what's happening to you right now, we trust in you as our [King], and we will continue to fight."

"That's right! If there's something you need to slice apart then leave it to us! Xenovia and I are your [Knights]."

I received a message from my reliable companions. Xenovia and Irina both seemed to have continuously defeated the opposing team's players. On the other side of the thin barrier, Barakiel-san said to me

"Hyoudou Issei-kun, the Rating Games will bring a variety of challenges. If you wish to lead your team to participate in professional games in the future, remember that there are sometimes situations in which power alone is useless."

Barakiel-san then looked back as he prepared to retreat towards the rear.

"Now then, I have to support my teammates. You stay there and work out what to do with your teammates."

After saying that, Barakiel-san waved his feathered wings and flew off. Because of the barrier, I had no way of getting to the other side! At that time, Ravel spoke to me.

"Ise-sama! What's going on!?"

"I'm sorry, Ravel, I was fighting in a corner of the field…and then I was trapped in by [Imprisonment]."

After I concisely explained the situation, Ravel immediately gave me a good idea.

"—Hmm. …There's a way to fix this. Ise-sama, do you know about the chess rule where only a [King] can change locations? Remember when you were present during the peace talks between the Three Factions and it was done."

During the peace talks…change positions…. Ah! The one that was used to rescue Gasper!

“”—Castling!””

Ravel and I said it together at the same time! Aha! I have seen it once! In order to rescue Gasper who was left behind in the old school building when the [Khaos Brigade] first attacked us, Rias used her unused [Rook] piece in the club activities room to transport herself into the old school building via ‘castling’. Right now, it should be possible to make use of that! Ravel continued

“Yes, it’s just as you say. Swap places with Rossweisse-sama. According to the rules, ‘castling’ can be performed once as long as the [King] is not in a ‘checkmate’ situation. You will be able to perform ‘castling’ once with Rossweisse-sama. In that case, Ise-sama will be free to move, and since Rossweisse-sama isn’t a [King], even if she swaps places with you, she can still enter the modified areas.”

Ravel had also included Rossweisse-san in the plan. Really, having Ravel by our side is truly encouraging! She immediately came up with a solution! No, this is something that I originally should have thought of! Perhaps this is what Barakiel-san was trying to lead me towards. This is also related to my worth as a [King] in the future. It was not long before word from Ravel came again.

“I have already contacted Rossweisse-sama about this, so please immediately begin preparations for ‘castling’!”

“Alright! Castling!”

I called the name of the move as I thought of the Evil Piece in my chest. And then — I was surrounded by the light of teleportation. The next instant, I was above the lake! It seems as though I really did change positions with Rossweisse-san!

“Awesome, it worked!”

I rejoiced! Next, as long as my [Rook] Rossweisse-san passes through the area that a [King] cannot enter and returns here, there won’t be any problems! However, Ravel’s voice had a tone of surprise when she contacted me again.

“How could this be…!”

“What is it, Ravel?”

“The place that Rossweisse-sama transferred to — is the same place that Ise-sama was in, but there’s a new opponent! It seems like it was an ambush!”

“—What!”

Ambush!? C-Could it be that after the [objects] were destroyed, one person stayed behind on that side, lying in wait for Rossweisse-san who would go there by ‘castling’!? And the instant that I heard the name of the ambusher, I was stunned!

“…It’s the Fallen Angel Cadre Armaros-sama!”

—What! The ambusher was actually the Cadre of special effects, Armaros! Ravel exclaimed in regret.

“The opponent is an anti-magic specialist! For a magic user like Rossweisse-sama, he is the worst possible opponent! …I see, this is what they were aiming for! Trapping Ise-sama was just a feint! Their real goal was—”

Rossweisse-san…! We gave the task of analysing the [object] to Rossweisse-san—. Did they also predict that…! Ravel continued

“…In a game with special rules, magic users who are able to wield a variety of magic are valued. Especially Rossweisse-sama who is using magic to locate the [objects], she is particularly important to us. …I never expected that our opponent had even predicted this and even made preparations for it…!”

…The ultimate aim of Barakiel-san, who had trapped me there, was to ambush Rossweisse-san…. We’ve really been deceived at every single turn…!

“…Rossweisse-san is trapped, and I can’t use ‘castling’ again either. But the game still goes on…. I see, so this is a Rating Game huh. Compared to participating as a [Pawn], it really is much tougher as a [King]—”

~~~~Arghh!

I couldn’t say a thing as an expression of anguish coloured my face. Gnashing my teeth and tightly clenching my fist, I endured my sense of regret. If I didn’t do that, I would probably roar at the top of my lungs. Daammmnnn itttt! This feeling of regret was completely different! …Rias…so this is what you felt like. Because I didn’t think things through, Rossweisse-san was now pinned down there. I was unable to use my team members flexibly, and I was even strung along by the opponents’ tactics every step of the way! This feeling of regret that I felt was different from what I felt as a [Pawn], and the pressure of it felt even heavier because of my responsibility! It’s frustrating, it’s truly frustrating! Ravel said

“…I think there is more than one member of the opponent’s team who is specialised in searching, there should be two of them. After all, researchers do account for the majority of the Grigori. Being able to find five of the [objects] in less than half of the allocated time limit is the best evidence of that.”

…After all, it is the organisation that Azazel-sensei commanded. The number of Fallen Angel researchers is truly horrifying. In order to deal with a variety of Rating Games, a variety of people were elected for the team. Ravel continued her speculation

“Most likely, in order to find [objects] as soon as possible, they prepared many different strategies. They must have also entered our territory. Since we haven’t found many [objects] on our side, our opponents must have been searching for objects on our side whilst they engaged in combat with us.”

…In other words, the time left for us was running out. Our searching magic has been sealed off, whilst the opponent’s searchers are still active. After a while, the [objects] that are on our side will be taken away, and they will be destroyed, leading to our defeat. Our opponent just needs to find and destroy two more [objects] to become victorious in this game—.
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Part 5

After Hyoudou Issei used ‘castling’ to perform a swap of his own position with Rossweisse, appearing before Rossweisse was the [Lightning] team’s [Queen], the Grigori Cadre Armaros.

“Gwahahahaha! I remember how you used to be a Valkyrie! You’re also good at magic, but I won’t be allowing you to pull any tricks!”

The person who stood in front of Rossweisse was a Fallen Angel Cadre who wore armour, a cloak, and was armed with an axe and a shield. He had a bearded face and even wore an eyepatch…it was unclear whether or not he only had one eye. Based on appearances alone, he looked like an extremely eccentric character that would leave people confused. However—. Rossweisse unleashed a full-powered attack of each attribute — only for it to be

“Fuwaa!”

Just one steady swing of his axe caused all of those attacks to be annihilated! They were not blocked, and neither were they deflected. He had used the impact of his axe swing to completely eliminate all of the incoming magic attacks. Even someone like Rossweisse, who had great confidence in her own magic attacks, couldn’t help but be stunned upon seeing what unfolded before her eyes.

“It’s my turn now! Hyaaaaaaahhh!”

Armaros lifted the axe up high, and then slammed it down in an instant! The resulting shockwave and its blinding speed destroyed the surface of the ground as it gradually approached Rossweisse. Rossweisse immediately erected a defensive magic circle. This was a technique that she had learnt from the Norse mythology, and when combined with her own characteristics as a [Rook], this could be described as an indestructible high defence magic shield. It was impossible for normal attacks to—. In the very instant that the shockwave from the axe came into contact with her magic circle, the sound of its shattering reverberated throughout the air, and Rossweisse’s prided defensive magic circle was easily destroyed!

“—!?”

She couldn’t even leak a single sound to express her surprise. This was the defensive magic circle that had defended against numerous powerful opponents in the past. It had even endured against the fierce attacks of Evil Dragons. Yet, a single attack from this Cadre of special effects far exceeded Rossweisse’s expectations. In this game, even if Armaros was bolstered by the characteristics of the [Queen] piece, something like this was unimaginable. Upon closer examination — the enchantment of a technique was inscribed upon Armaros’ axe. And that technique seemed familiar because she had seen it somewhere before.

—Anti-magic!

…Armaros’ anti-magic — she had heard about his tenacious study of anti-magic… but she had never imagined that he would be able to eliminate her magic so easily. Although she was aware that Armaros relied on physical methods to eliminate

magic…she never thought that such an outcome could be obtained by enchanting his own weapons with the results of his anti-magic research…. Rossweisse communicated her current situation to Ravel. In order to analyse the [object], she had received one of them from Xenovia. That was why she absolutely could not act carelessly. She could not allow the [object] to be destroyed by her opponent either. Ravel said to Rossweisse

“I will think of countermeasures.”

Rossweisse judged that facing him head-on would be the worst possible situation for her, thus she quickly flew into the air. By using magic, she could enhance the abilities of her own body and increase her own speed, and after that, she could then cast a barrage of magic attacks. Since she had the advantage in speed, all she had to do was fire off magic towards a blind spot—. Just as Rossweisse was considering this, Armaros raised his shield. The same enchantment that was present on his axe appeared on his shield.

“How sly of you! You’re toooooo naive though!”

His shield shone with a radiance that enveloped the entire surrounding area! And as for Rossweisse who was bathed in this…she realised that her own speed had suddenly reduced. All of the physical abilities that she had enhanced with magic had disappeared! What was even more shocking was the analysis technique that she had been using on the [object] — it had been also eliminated by this radiant light! The shield that Armaros was holding in his hand actually had the power to decompose magic!

“Guhahahahaha! When set against the flow of magic, my axe will tear it apart, and my shield will eliminate it! My research on anti-magic is not just limited to theoretical knowledge!”

The announcer’s cry was then heard.

<<Ooh! The magic of Rossweisse-senshu [161] who is a talented magic user now appears to be helpless against Armaros-senshu! Armaros-senshu, who is better known as a researcher of anti-magic is indeed a Cadre of the Grigori! The effects of his anti-magic are extraordinary! Just like their previous games, the true strengths of Hyoudou Issei’s team have not been utilised!&rt;&rt;

The announcer commented on the situation rather loosely. Rossweisse shamefully clenched her teeth, and once again decided to strengthen her offensive and defensive magic. But Armaros’ axe tore her magic apart one by one, and due to the effects of his shield, even her speed-enhancing magic had been eliminated. At this moment, Rossweisse was convinced. —Her compatibility with this Fallen Angel was the absolute worst. The opponent most certainly must have taken this into account, which is why Armaros was facing her. She was good at using magic for offense and defense, hence an anti-magic expert with the worst compatibility with her was sent here. Strategically speaking, this was a natural decision…but she never imagined that her own attacks would be completely useless. Her overly naive thoughts were exposed. Indeed, Armaros was a colleague of that Azazel. He was a powerful man who had overcome all kinds of battles and survived—. But there still existed magic that was effective against Armaros.

—Sealing techniques.

The very thing that Rossweisse had been researching in the battle against Qlippoth were sealing techniques. Even Armaros, who was an expert in anti-magic, would not be able to fully eliminate a barrier. The problem was…that to devise a barrier that would be able to seal Armaros away would take a long time. If she only made a half-baked barrier, Armaros would definitely be capable of destroying it from within. It had to be something that could fully seal him. In this case, she really needed time in order to construct the technique—. If another one of her allies came here, then it could be done. But they were currently engaged in combat against the opponent, so it would take a significant amount of time for one of her allies to arrive. Moreover, it was already taking all of the effort that she could muster in order to deal with Armaros' attacks under the current circumstances. Just as Rossweisse was thinking this, Armaros shortened the distance between the two of them and swung his axe down!

"Yaaaaaaarrrgghhh!"

Rossweisse instantly expanded several layers of defensive magic circles — but they were destroyed layer after layer. Rossweisse immediately added another defensive magic circle. But Armaros' axe mercilessly destroyed Rossweisse's magic circles one after the other. The shockwave that was generated by the swing of his axe passed through the magic circle and was transmitted to her body. …Immense pain coursed throughout her entire body. If hit by a direct attack, it was very likely that she would be forced to retire from the match. This was the one thing that she had to avoid! Rossweisse endured the shockwave of the axe, and even created an enormous crater as she crashed into the ground. Just as the final layer of her defensive magic circle was destroyed—. A blast of energy was unleashed from behind Rossweisse. Armaros immediately responded to this by dodging this blow. Armaros directed his eyes to the person behind Rossweisse.

"Hohoho, so another one has come! I have to say that you have excellent taste in choosing a mask to wear!"

Rossweisse also turned around to look — the person who had appeared behind her walked forwards slowly, she wore a red mask and was the [Queen] of the [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth Team], Bina Lessthan. Bina stood in front of Rossweisse and said

"Are you alright?"

It was the voice of a young lady — it sounded like she was in her teen years. Bina then confronted Armaros. At the same time, a message came from Ravel.

"Rossweisse-sama, Bina-sama has rushed over to your side. Please team up to take Armaros-sama down!"

It seems it was under the directions of Ravel. Indeed, her intention was to deal with the opponent's [Queen] right here. Ravel understood that this opponent was troublesome. Armaros seemed rather happy upon seeing Bina's entrance, and instantly began to close in on her. He swung his axe horizontally near her waist. But it was easily evaded by Bina. At the same time, from her hands — she unleashed an extraordinary amount of demonic energy! A red magic circle — it was a pattern that

she seemed to have created herself, yet it was reminiscent of a dragon. To be expected of Armaros, he immediately realised the danger. But Bina did not mind, and relentlessly let loose a cannon of tremendous demonic energy. That bombardment of tremendous demonic energy — destroyed everything that was in sight, it was so powerful that it seemed inhuman. This wasn't the kind of demonic energy that just any high-class Devil was capable of producing. And upon seeing this, Armaros couldn't help but become ecstatic. Bina said to Rossweisse.

"I will take care of the fighting, you construct a barrier sealing technique."

After saying that, Bina began to face Armaros head-on. Rossweisse went along with Bina's intentions, and began to construct a technique. While constructing it, she also began to think.

—Although I don't really know who Bina Lessthan is, I feel like I can trust her.

The [Queen] of the [Sekiryuutei of the Blazing Truth Team] was far more reliable than she had ever imagined—.

Part 6

On the other hand, Xenovia and Irina, who were exploring the eastern side, were also under attack from the opponent. Their opponents numbered — a group of three people. They were mostly likely a group of [Pawns] who had gathered together to launch an attack. According to information that they had obtained beforehand, the opponent's [Pawns] numbered eight in total. The previous announcement stated that Irina and the others had already defeated a [Bishop] and a [Knight], as well as three [Pawns]. More specifically, it was Irina who defeated the [Bishop] and one [Pawn], whereas Xenovia had defeated the [Knight] and two [Pawns]. Perhaps the reason why the opponent sent reinforcements was because Irina had defeated their [Bishop]. Irina was exploring the region that she was assigned to, and coincidentally found several Fallen Angels who were searching for [objects] in that area. She had defeated the [Bishop] that probably excelled at searching, as well as a [Pawn] who was assisting. Whether or not this resulted in a major blow to the other side was still unclear, but since the other side sent reinforcements here, it meant that—. Irina moved closer to Xenovia and whispered

(It seems like there might be an [object] nearby.)

(The reinforcements indicate that something major is happening huh.)

Indeed, the number of players in a Rating Game were limited. When fighting in such a vast field, if the situation was not at a critical junction, then it was highly unlikely that their combat power was going to be focused on a single area. —Since this was the case, it was obvious that this was a very important area for them. The opponent had already destroyed five [objects], so victory was almost within their grasp. Right now, even if they had to make some sacrifices, they were most certainly after another [object]. After all, the rules this time allowed a team to win without having to defeat the [King]. In this way, the existence of an [object] was extremely important. Having to obtain one, and allowing one to be taken away were very troublesome. — Perhaps this was a key moment?

Irina smiled wryly as she used her eyes to signal Xenovia. It seemed like Xenovia also planned to fight here. At times like these, communicating with Xenovia simply via eye contact like how they used to when they were a duo caused Irina's confidence to double. Both sides leapt into action at the same time. The opponent was dominant when it came down to numbers. And after a few clashes, it was clear that the opponents were far from being as simple as mere [Pawns]. A female Fallen Angel wielded a large sword forged by light in her hands, and based on the speed of her attacks, it almost seemed like she was a [Knight]. Her movements also seemed rather skillful…after all, they were also people who had survived numerous battlefields, and would not be defeated so easily. One Fallen Angel pulled away and began to fire arrows of light as support, but Irina swung Hauteclere to unleash a shockwave. They dealt with the more bothersome one first. Although the bow-wielding Fallen Angel dodged the shockwave, he was quickly cut down by Xenovia who had predicted the position that they would evade to. At times like these, even if they didn't use words to communicate, Irina and Xenovia were able to understand each other's thoughts process, and could immediately pursue. Soon afterwards, the

bow-wielding Fallen Angel was enveloped in the light of retirement, and then disappeared from the field.

<<Of the [Lightning] team, one [Pawn] has retired.&rt;&rt;

The announcement was made. It seemed like the one that they had defeated just then was one of the opponent's [Pawns]. There were two people remaining.

As long as Xenovia and I are a combination, we can do it! As long as we can defeat the next two players, we'll be able to search for the [object] that is possibly in our vicinity.

While Irina thought that—. Thunderclouds appeared above Irina and Xenovia, and from there, fierce rays of lightning sprang out. Along with the arrival of the thunder, a man appeared—.

"Hmm, I'll help out too."

Barakiel — the Fallen Angel Cadre who had once been called the [Lightning of God], and currently the vice-governor of the Grigori. This man stood before Irina and Xenovia. …He was more experienced in life and death struggles than the two people currently before him combined, and if someone was to be struck by this man's lightning, they would not escape unharmed. Especially for a Devil such as Xenovia, light was a highly toxic poison.

(Ise-kun, I'm sorry if I get defeated.)

For now, she apologised to her team's leader in her heart. Needless to say, even if she was defeated, she would do everything that she could before that. The combination of Irina and Xenovia began to challenge the lightning that threatened them. The lightning that Akeno and Barakiel released as their allies now seemed so cold and terrifying—. But no matter what happened, he — Hyoudou Issei - would surely determine the victor at the very end. This was the conclusion that Irina and Xenovia drew from their past experiences.

(So, darling. Use that…that unrivalled and impossibly powerful attack so that everyone can see!)

Indeed, although he was fated to accept a variety of evaluations, whether it was actual combat or a Rating Game, his strength was capable of overturning the entire situation—.

Part 7

“—To sum things up, Irina and I are currently fighting against the other side’s [King]. That’s all, from Xenovia.”

“—Just as planned, we’re stalling the opponent’s [Queen], Armaros here.”

I — Hyoudou Issei - listened to the status reports from Xenovia and Rossweisse; both sides were in a heated fight.

<<Battles are continuing in various places. Since the beginning of the game until now, Hyoudou Issei-senshu’s team has had the advantage when it comes to combat, whereas the [Lightning] team has had the advantage in terms of the number of [objects] destroyed. So, will the [Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] gain a difficult victory just as they did in the previous game, or will they lose as a result of the [objects] being captured and destroyed!? Victory cannot be obtained by relying on force and power alone, for this is a Rating Game!&rt;&rt;

…Damn it, this announcer is actually saying such ridiculous things during the commentary! However, I’ve also realised that the situation is not optimal right now! Just at this time, Ravel finally gave the signal.

“Ise-sama, it’s time. This is already enough. —Please enact the plan that was mentioned earlier.”

“—Alright, I understand. Although I regret it a bit, this is something simpler that I can use to make them understand.”

“Yes, please show them the results of a simple and clear answer.”

I began to carry out the plan that Ravel had proposed earlier — I began to fly towards the centre of the field. Hovering above a deep valley, I began the chant for power.

“—The Crimson Red Dragon dwelling within me, awaken from your dominance”

A dazzling crimson glow was emitted from the gem on my right gauntlet.

[—The Crimson Heavenly Dragon I possess within me, rise up to become a King and roar]

Ophis’ voice echoed out from the gem—.

The gem on my left gauntlet unleashed a jet-black aura.

“—The jet-black God of Infinity”

An incredible crimson aura enveloped my entire body.

[—The glorious God of Dreams]

The jet-black aura of infinity was then encased over it—.

“[—Watch over the false forbidden existence we shall become that transcends the

boundaries]”

This verse is slightly different from the past. The difference lies in the addition ‘false’. My crimson armour was then tinged with a jet-black pattern. The power of the Dragon God had fully manifested. And then we recited the final verse together—.

“[—Thou shalt dance like radiance within our inferno]”

“<<[D∞D!! D∞D D∞D!! D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!! D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!!!! D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!!!!!!]&rt;&rt;”

All of the gems resounded with a voice which said [D∞D!!] and permeated through to the soul. An ∞ symbol emerged on all of the gems!

“[<<Dragon ∞ Drive!!!!!!&rt;&rt;]”

Dragon Deification — no, it was something similar to Dragon Deification. If I did use Dragon Deification, my existence itself would immediately collapse. So within the chant, I added on a ‘restriction’, and though only for a short while, I could utilise this extraordinary power. After the transformation, Ravel notified all of our members.

“Everyone, Ise-sama has already undergone Pseudo-Dragon Deification! Please move according to the plan that was proposed earlier!”

There isn’t much time left! So I’ll have to do this quickly! Four large cannons emerged from my four wings, and I began to prepare for ∞ Blaster! An incredibly vast amount of aura quietly gathered at the muzzle of my cannons. Starting from the very instant that I let the cannons loose, the countdown for maintaining Pseduo-Dragon Deification will begin! A total of ten seconds! I wouldn’t be firing it just anywhere, but in accordance with the plan — the majority of the field will be blasted away!

“<<[D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D D∞D!!!!!!!!]&rt;&rt;”

An [∞] symbol appeared on all of the gems of my armour, as the colours of red and black flashed alternatingly. I can’t rely on pure power alone? I can’t win a Rating Game with pure power alone? Perhaps that may be the case. If I was just relying on some half-baked strength and power, people like us who are still inexperienced when it comes to the games would be made fun of. But—. If it’s not some half-baked strength, and not some half-baked power, then what happens? What will they think when they see the absolute power that we have gained through actual combat!?

—I, we, have worked hard to make it through this one intense year, so let’s give them a good look at the power that we have obtained!!

“I’ve confirmed that all of our allies within the range of impact have retreated.”

After hearing Ravel’s message, I felt delighted!

“Let’s gooooooooooooooo!”

“<<[∞ Blaster!!!!!!]&rt;&rt;”

An incredibly vast amount of aura was discharged from the muzzles of my four cannons! I maintained my firing position, drew out a semicircle as I turned, and continued to unleash the jet-black aura symbolising infinity and the crimson aura!

[V! IV! III! II!]

Until I reached the limit, I continued to bombard the field with my cannons—.

[I! 0!]

After the countdown finally ended, I also released Pseudo-Dragon Deification, and reverted back to my crimson armour. …Because of the aftereffects of Pseudo-Dragon Deification, most of my stamina and demonic energy had been depleted… but my crimson armour wouldn’t be undone yet.

—Alright, now I can continue to fight! After the potent bombardment of aura concluded, the sight that appeared before my eyes was — a barren and deserted wasteland with no mountains, valleys, rivers, nor trees. Everything had been blown away. The announcer trembled as he spoke

<<Oooooohh! W-W-What just happened! T-The field actually! More than half of the field has actually been annihilated! Incredible! Hyoudou Issei-senshu's cannons have erased the field's scenery! THIS IS TRULY POWER BEYOND

IMAGINATIIIOOOOON!&rt;&rt;

At the same time, announcements for the retirement of our opponents and the destruction of [objects] were made.

<<Of the [Lightning] team, one [Rook] and one [Bishop] have retired.&rt;&rt;

<<Confirmation that the [Sekiryuutei] team has destroyed four [objects]. They have gained four points.&rt;&rt;

That cannon blast just now took out one a [Rook] and [Bishop] from our opponent's side! That was a good result! If they were players who were searching for [objects], then it could be described as an even better result! I also destroyed four [objects]! Our numbers have increased almost instantaneously! This pushes our total up to five! Because we kept one more on our side that we haven't yet destroyed, it'll be a victory for us as long as we can find one more!

Now then, I'll go over our strategy. Although my Pseudo-Dragon Deification can utilise an incredible amount of power, it has a time limit. I can maintain the transformation for three minutes, but if I convert that to perform attacks or switch to defence, then the transformation time limit will be reduced. A cannon blast at maximum firepower — if I use ∞ Blaster, the time limit will be reduced even further. From the moment that the bombardment began, a ten second countdown also began, and once it reached zero, Pseudo-Dragon Deification was forcibly lifted. There is also a crucial problem after the transformation is undone. —My stamina and demonic energy is vastly depleted. During our training, because of different styles of fighting that had been used, there were situations where I wasn't even able to maintain my normal armour. To put it simply, Pseudo-Dragon Deification is a final move that can only be used at a critical time, but it is also the strongest means of attack that our team has. Based on the above reasons, preparations were made for this plan at the beginning of this Rating Game. We first needed to make sure that I would be able to use Pseudo-Dragon Deification. However, it absolutely cannot be used when up against the other side's [King]. To give a reason for that, it would be because we don't know what kinds of tricks the other side has up their sleeve, so transforming and charging in recklessly could lead to my attacks being blocked, thus wasting an important means of offense. That being the case, it is necessary to find the right time to use it. After Ravel confirmed the rules for [Object Break], the gridded map was opened at the beginning of the game, and the plan was communicated to all members of the team—.

"We need to investigate the [objects] that are in our territory first."

Ravel used a pen to mark out the map. The field this time had half of a chessboard as our territory. A red circle was drawn to further divide our territory in half. That was a quarter of the field.

"However, it would not be very efficient if we were to search every corner of our territory. Moreover, there is also a time limit, so we should only target one area. We only need to perform a thorough search of half of our territory. But, it'll be bad if we allow the other side to discover our intentions, so we should still scatter all of the members of our team into the every region of our territory. And then, one group will perform a thorough search of half our territory."

“But, what are we going to do about the exploration of the other half of our territory?”

Irina asked. Limiting our search of [objects] to one quarter of the field would perhaps make it much easier to find them, but the other areas will be left unexplored.

“Indeed, if that’s the case, it’s impossible for us to win. Perhaps our opponent will take the lead when it comes to the number of [objects] destroyed. But once the game reaches its mid-phase, we’ll change our style immediately.”

Ravel smiled as she explained the plan.

“Our team has been evaluated to have nothing but power. I don’t think there’s anything wrong with this. Of course, some people have said that there must be a minimum level of strategy. The people who want to laugh at us can laugh all they want. —However, if they see someone significant suppressed by true power, the people who laughed at us will most certainly shut up.”

Ravel said to me

“Ise-sama possesses an unrivalled power that can be demonstrated by an immense cannon blast of energy with Pseudo-Dragon Deification—. This single blow will create that kind of change in the game, and they will be able to see it for themselves. —So in this game, please wait until the time is right, and then blow away the majority of the field.”

[—What!]

Ravel’s shocking plan left everyone speechless. Ravel then continued to add a few points. At the beginning, we would need to perform a thorough search of half of our territory. The area to be explored was our eastern side. The ones responsible for this would be Xenovia and Irina. At the same time, in order to prevent the other side from realising this, we still needed to visit the other areas to make it look as though we were searching. We also needed to move into our opponent’s territory. But, this was all just an act. Of course, it’d be best if we came across [objects], but that was not the goal this time. After clashing several times, and when both sides had made some gains in destroying [objects], it would be my turn to shine with Pseudo-Dragon Deification. I would fly into the centre of the field, and the unexplored areas of our territory, as well as half of our opponent’s territory — in other words, a vertical half of the entire field would be blown away by a semicircular sweep with ∞ Blaster. I would draw a counter-clockwise semicircle going from north to south, which would eliminate the entire western side. Because the field had a powerful barrier set up by the tournament authorities, such a plan was possible. And in this way, the majority of the field in our territory that hadn’t been explored would be blown away, so any [objects] that we hadn’t found would naturally be destroyed by me. After ∞ Blaster ended, we would close in on the remaining quarter of the field that we had not yet explored (the quarter of our opponent’s territory that had not been hit by my bombardment), thereby moving into the final phase. It truly was a bold and ambitious strategy! Although it was an approach that fully utilised our power…the idea seemed so perfect that even Xenovia seemed slightly perplexed. Ravel revealed a calm smile.

“Simple petty tactics are completely useless in the face of true power; we shall burn this terror into the eyes of the contestants of the tournament, as well as all those who are watching it. There are a few competing teams in this tournament who are able to

cause destruction to such a degree, but this is decisive power that even the lower level of god-class beings will not be able to overcome with strategy. This is what we need to demonstrate once more."

And then, Ravel said this to me in a very simple manner.

"I will use tactics different to Rias-sama and Sona-sama with this team to show everyone."

Upon seeing this haughty declaration from Ravel, I couldn't help recalling what her mother had told me.

—Ravel's true nature is the path of supremacy.

……Using all of our power and knowledge on the path towards supremacy huh. This is Ravel's talent…. If Riser was able to make use of Ravel's talent — perhaps that Rating Game might have resulted in a one-sided loss for us. ……Unshakable determination and a spectacular way of executing it. All of it was so that people could acutely realise it. —Ravel was the cornerstone of this team. In order to continue surviving in this tournament, Ravel's strength was indispensable. And at the same time, because she was the heart of this team, our chances of victory would immediately collapse if she were to be attacked. …Throughout this game, there may be people who become aware that Ravel is the core of our team. And so, as the tournament progresses, there will be more people aiming for Ravel than me. … Through this tournament, the slumbering talents that people of various factions possess will be discovered. Is this one of aspects that the managers — Beelzebub-sama and the God of Destruction Shiva are expecting? Or was this an earlier plan of Azazel-sensei and Sirzechs-sama? If that's the case, then perhaps Ravel is the first person to fit this category. This reliable and promising strategic advisor-sama sent another message.

"The number of [objects] that our side has destroyed puts us into a check position. We just need one more to win. This is something that the other side also knows. They will no longer hesitate, and will probably begin to attack while looking for [objects] or seek to snatch it from us. Now is the crucial moment where everything matters, everyone!"

Alright! In that case, Barakiel-san will have no choice but to appear!

I asked Ravel

"Ravel, where is Barakiel-san right now? Is he still fighting against Xenovia and Irina?"

"—Hmm, so you want to decide the victor of the game? I understand, since you want to determine a winner, please proceed."

Ravel accepted my suggestion! Since the game had already progressed to such a stage, it was perfectly feasible for me to act like this as a [King]. Although Armaros-san was caught up in the western side of our territory which was within the range of my Blaster, we did not hear an announcement about his retirement, and so I was somewhat worried, but my team members would deal with him.

“Ise-sama, acting as a [King] to take down another [King] will greatly boost morale, and the evaluations from everyone definitely will not be low! Please show them just what kind of man the [King] of Hyoudou Issei’s peerage is!

“No problem!”

As expected of my peerage! And my manager! I then flew towards the location where Xenovia and Irina were fighting against Barakiel-san! They were in the north-eastern corner! I focused my strength into my dragon wings, and flew towards there at high-speed! Although Pseudo-Dragon Deification had used up the majority of my stamina, I could still continue to fight!

“Hold on!”

“We’ve found Hyoudou Issei!”

On the way, several of Barakiel-san’s team members attempted to stop my progression—.

“Don’t get in the way of my lord!”

The one who crashed into the Fallen Angels from their flank was my [Pawn], Bova! Bova spat out a powerful torrent of flames which did not lose to his father’s in intensity, and then stood in front of the Fallen Angels to block them off! Bova fearlessly said

“[King]! Leave this to me!”

“Alright, I’m counting on you!”

I left that to Bova, and then flew towards Barakiel-san’s location without any hesitation! Although I was panting heavily with ‘Haa haa…’ noises…I could not stop here to rest!

<<Of the [Lightning] team, one [Pawn] has retired.&rt;&rt;

Yeah! An update from our side! It seems like Bova has already taken care of an opponent! As I flew at high-speed over the field, I was soon able to see thunderclouds! That’s where Xenovia and Irina were fighting! Xenovia and Irina were up against Barakiel-san and two other Fallen Angels in a two-to-three fight. One of the two Fallen Angels was a woman who used a greatsword forged of light, while the other one was a male Fallen Angel who wielded a halberd of light.

“Ise! You came!”

“Sure enough, my darling was thinking of having a showdown between the leaders!”

Both Xenovia and Irina welcomed my arrival. Speaking of which, even if it was the two of them up against Barakiel-san’s lightning, they had done very well! Although their uniform had already become tattered, and they were low on stamina, both of them were still fine and lively, and evaded a direct strike from the lightning.

“I’ll leave the other two to you two!”

I left the two other Fallen Angel opponents to Xenovia and Irina, while I flew directly towards Barakiel-san!

“Barakiel-san! Let’s finish off what we started!”

I changed my right arm into its Solid Impact mode whilst I evaded Barakiel-san’s lightning—.

[Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost Boost!!!!!!]

[Solid Impact Booster!!!!]

I quickly sent Barakiel-san flying through the air! Barakiel-san’s beaten body was languid, but he steadied himself and prepared for a direct confrontation.

“Very well. But, do not be careless. Are you able to understand what I’m thinking?”

From here, it was a melee fight between [Kings]! My punches and kicks all hammered down upon Barakiel-san’s face, shoulders, torso, and legs! On the other hand, Barakiel-san’s lightning-imbued punches and kicks also struck my face, torso, and my legs! His attacks of lightning, a combination of electricity and light, were transmitted to me through my armour, and because my reserves of stamina and demonic energy were low, I couldn’t stop myself from trembling due to the damage that was done to my entire body! And amidst the heated exchange with Barakiel-san, I deeply felt it.

—Barakiel-san had pulled the rug out from underneath me when it came to strategy. It was as if he was trying to guide me. It was as if this person was acting in the place of Azazel-sensei. Even his words just then were the same. He deliberately said “Are you able to understand what I’m thinking?” in order to guide my thought process. … He was encouraging my growth through this Rating Game. A year ago — I died once because of a Fallen Angel. And in the year following that — I’ve grown to this point by the hand of a Fallen Angel. And precisely because of that, I know that I have to repay that debt now! I have to respond to their expectations! Barakiel-san, I will defeat you! But before that, I have to repay you for what you just did! I faced Barakiel-san directly and said

“I…at night, I occasionally sleep together with Akeno-san! Being caught between Rias and Akeno-san while I sleep is the best!”

Instantly, Barakiel-san seemed taken aback by what I had just said! At first he was embarrassed, and confused, and then he became mad!

“……. …Kuh! Y-You’re using that trick!”

My attack accurately struck Barakiel-san as he let his guard down! However, my breathing had already become heavy and disturbed! My stamina had almost reached its limits as well! But I didn’t care about that and continued to speak!

“Also, for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, Akeno-san often cooks for me! Akeno-san also makes bentos[171] for me!”

By combining my attacks with these verbal outbursts, Barakiel-san was gradually falling into a downward spiral! His intense tremors were the best evidence of that! But, I needed to properly convey how I felt about Akeno-san to him!

“Akeno-san has always acted as the elder who stands before us as a leader, she is in fact together with girls of a similar age to herself, but she can be hurt by the little

things, and I know how delicate she is! Akeno-san worries about all of us; regardless of whether I or someone else is injured, she keeps the pain inside her heart, that's something I'm also very clear on!"

Akeno-san is actually nothing more than an ordinary girl! Although she usually acts like an onee-san at school, I know that she also has the side of an ordinary girl because we've been living under the same roof together!

"To me, not only is she a caring onee-san, she's also a cute girl, as well as a woman who can reveal a beautiful smile. I'm absolutely certain of these things!"

But in response, Barakiel-san widened his eyes, his expression became even more imposing, and he sent me flying through the air again! Barakiel-san shouted out whilst sparks of lightning erupted from his entire body!

"Even if you say that! Even if you understand Akeno! You — still chose Rias Gremory didn't you!?"

"—What!"

When Barakiel-san said that one sentence…my body froze. Barakiel-san charged at me with a flying kick and continued

"You chose Rias Gremory! Everyone also understood that, and agreed with it! I also heard about your promise of the future with her! You will be together with Rias Gremory from now on! Well…well! What about Akeno!? Akeno…who will be together with her!? My daughter's heart is attracted to you, and yet you've been taken away by Rias Gremory, so what will my daughter do from now on!?"

Speechless, I could only allow myself to be beaten by Barakiel-san unilaterally. His eyes — shed tears.

"Akeno…she will never put the blame on Rias Gremory nor you! To Akeno, both of you are important people! From the bottom of her heart, she sincerely wishes for the happiness of you two! But where is Akeno's happiness!? Who else can ensure the happiness of my daughter!? Akeno's future…will only be marred with sadness! Since that's the case…"

Barakiel-san grabbed my neck — and wept.

"…I should have split you and Akeno apart from the very beginning. As long as she likes someone else, Akeno will also become happy, right? You…will you tell Akeno this? Or do you have other ways to make Akeno happy…? I am her father. …My daughter, Akeno, she is in love with you. So, tell me your answer! The Hyoudou Issei whom my daughter loves! How will you treat my daughter!?"

Barakiel-san's tears and a penetrating punch struck my face squarely. My helmet was shattered, exposing my face underneath it. …Barakiel-san had also cried during the graduation ceremony. I think as he watched the graduation ceremony, he must have been recalling the past, and also casting his eyes towards Akeno-san's future. And because of that, he was worried about Akeno-san. The cry of Barakiel-san's soul was carried forth in that punch, and rang through to my mind and body. … Akeno-san's happiness. In love with me…. I had already sworn on my future with Rias, so for Akeno-san…what about her? Could it be as Barakiel-san said, would it

be better if Akeno-san liked someone else…?

…….

…Memories of the time spent together with Akeno-san gradually surfaced within my mind.

—…How do you feel, Ise-kun, after hearing that? You hate Fallen Angels, right? They killed you and Asia-chan once, and tried to destroy this city once, there's no way you can hold good thoughts about them.

The first time that Akeno-san told me the truth about herself in front of me, she was prepared to accept that I would hate her, and still she said all of that. But, I — simply could not find a reason to hate Akeno-san.

—Not only that, I have the blood of a fallen angel in me, you know? Can you forgive me? Although I reincarnated into a Devil, the fact that I have the blood of a Fallen Angel in me doesn't change. …I may have approached you wanting to get hated, you know? No, that's definitely the case. I…am the worst kind of woman….

No, Akeno-san…you're the best woman! Not only are you gentle, you're also more delicate than anyone else—.

—Mum…! I…! I wanted to see dad more often! I wanted dad to pat my head more! I wanted to play much more with dad! Dad… dad and mum…I wanted to live together more with the three of us…!

She was lonelier than anyone else, and sought love more than anyone else.

—Ufufu, that would make it my first French kiss, I guess.

She really surprised me. But, Akeno-san's first kiss was with me, and that really made me feel proud.

—She's right, if it's the same fallen-angel then I will be able to make Ise-kun happy. That's why please have more confidence. If you don't take another step with Rias, then I can't—

When I was frightened by the shadow of Raynare, and didn't dare to even think of going further with Rias, you said those things to motivate me. Now, being able to enjoy the happiness I have with Rias is also thanks to your encouragement back then, Akeno-san—.

—…Yeah. Yeah, I'm okay now. I will live on for the sake of you, Rias, and everyone else. I will become stronger with you, Ise. I will be with you forever.

I also cherished Akeno-san, I definitely wouldn't die again, because I had to keep living with her—.

—Ise, I love you. Ufufu.

I also—.

……Have Akeno-san like someone else? Separate her…from me…? Akeno-san… and a man other than myself….

…….

…Something like that, how could I possibly forgive it! Neither will I allow something like that to happen! Akeno-san and I…our hearts are linked! I like all of Akeno-san! Akeno-san has always been watching me! She belongs only to me — Himejima Akeno! —Letting some other bastard take her away is something I cannot forgive! Akeno-san's sleek black hair, her smile, her gentleness, her S side, her personality which makes her easily saddened, her lips, her well-endowed oppai, everything, all of her — I want to make it mine!

—I decided.

I decided! I steeled my determination! Azazel-sensei, I am the Hyoudou Issei who is determined to become a harem king! So, no matter how many people it is, as long as it's me…whether they pursue me or if it's a woman that I pursue — I will make them happy! Whether it's Rias, Asia, or Akeno-san — I will definitely make them happy! That's right! Hyoudou Issei! You must say it! You have to say it! I need to make sure that the media of the Underworld, and even all of the factions hear it! I cried out with a voice that reverberated across the entire field!

"Then, I — love Akeno-san!"

And I went on!

"Barakiel-san, please allow me to take responsibility…I will be responsible! I will not give her to anyone else! I will…take Akeno-san! I will treasure Himejima Akeno for the rest of my life! Just as I have made Rias happy, I will also make Akeno happy! My dream is to become a harem king! The women who like me, and the women who love me, I will make all of them happy without leaving anyone out!"

"—WHAT!!"

Barakiel-san was shocked! This was the confession from my heart! Yes, I will take responsibility! Barakiel-san! Please accept my thoughts!

"I promise to make her happy! —I will take care of Himejima Akeno for as long as I live! Akeno is mine! Akeno, I LOOOOOOVVEEE YOOUUU!"

I faced the speechless Barakiel-san directly!

[Boost Boost Boost

instantly elevate. As expected of you, partner.]

Yeah, that's what I thought too. Until now, I've always fought with feelings of anger against villains using my Sacred Gear. But when facing good opponents, I use my dreams and desires! Now, Akeno-san. You should have heard my shout just then through the broadcast right? That is what I've finally understood, and finally noticed, my feelings for you. Hearing my confession — the cry of my soul, Barakiel-san shed tears at the same time as he was knocked down.

"……Ah, how could this be…! How could I be crying at a time like this…! Azazel, he has finally set his path — he has personally said that he wants to go down the path of a harem king…!"

Due to my powerful strike, although Barakiel-san was able to stand, he was trembling non-stop. On the other side, Xenovia's Durandal and Excalibur released an exceedingly powerful holy aura, which cut down the wielder of the greatsword of light.

<<Of the [Lightning] team, one [Knight] has retired. &rt;&rt;

The broadcast announced Xenovia's victory. It looks like her opponent was also a [Knight].

"…Using destructive power is not only the privilege of my [King]. But, that was a really good confession, Ise!"

That's right, my [Knight], Xenovia! Irina was also easily avoiding the fierce onslaught of the halberd from the Fallen Angel in mid-air. The halberd's shockwaves caused the air to vibrate tremendously, and it also dug out trails on the ground. On the other hand, Irina used Hauteclere to perform a series of high-speed slashes. Her opponent was unable to counter it. Irina-san then extended a long whip of light from her left hand and cleverly wrapped it around her opponent's foot. By pulling on the whip, her opponent's stance was broken. This was the special offensive light energy technique that only Irina was able to use, though some inspiration was taken from [Excalibur Mimic]. Her opponent was forced to his knees, and he was instantly cut down by the enormous amount of aura that Irina released from Hauteclere.

"Amen!"

"Guaaaaaaahh!"

After suffering from that attack from the holy aura of Hauteclere, her opponent was finally enshrouded in the light of retirement.

<<Of the [Lightning] team, one [Pawn] has retired.&rt;&rt;

"Fufu, in fact, I can also use some fancy attacks! It's all because of darling's confession that I became so excited all of a sudden!"

Irina had also dealt with her opponent! In that case, I should also finish off my final task as [King]! Well, Barakiel-san! Please accept this final blow! Cannons emerged out from my dragon wings, and then pointed forwards! A red aura gathered at the muzzle of the cannons!

"These are! My true feelings, towards you, and towards Akeno-san!"

[Boost Boost Boost

New Life

Part I

A few days after defeating Barakiel-san's team—.

A slight change had occurred at the dining table of the Hyoudou household.

"Here, ah— ♪"

Sitting beside me (on my right), Akeno-san used chopsticks to feed me tamagoyaki[11] in the "Ah—" manner. After the match against Barakiel-san concluded, Akeno-san has constantly been sticking to my side. I ate the tamagoyaki that was fed to me. Mmm~ it was juicy, sweet, and truly delicious!

"Is it delicious? A-na-ta[12]♪"

Akeno-san asked. When she said it like that, it almost sounded as if she was my wife! No, but I did say that I would make Akeno-san happy, regardless of whether it was the present or the future. And sitting on my other side (on my left), Rias finally exploded the very instant that she saw this.

"You actually said a-na-ta, Akeno! I-It's too early for that!"

Akeno-san smiled softly.

"Ara? I have a promise with Ise for our future. So isn't it only natural for me to address him like this? Rias, Ise made the same promise to you on the day of the graduation ceremony. Can't you also call him that?"

Rias puffed out her cheeks and immediately retorted

"E-Even so, it's too soon! F-First, we have to hold a proper engagement ceremony —"

"A deep relationship is already enough ♪ Ufufu, I already feel so happy that I don't even know what to do."

At this point, Akeno-san almost seemed to dance on the spot, and became rather cheerful. And then, Akeno-san issued a very erotic challenge to Rias.

"Rias, allow me to declare this. In the future, I might have Ise's child before you. No, I definitely will. This I can say with confidence. Ufufu."

M-My child! What are you saying, Akeno-san! I don't even know how to react to this! Tears began to well up in Rias' eyes as she said

"That's something I can also vow for the future!"

She was pouting angrily, but she was also very cute at the same time. After watching this from the side, Xenovia, Asia and Irina also said

"Listen up, Asia, Irina! We must also get closer to Ise to make him take responsibility for us too!"

"I don't quite understand, but I won't lose to my onee-samas!"

“In other words, we can no longer simply watch from the side!”

Kunou looked at this situation with a serious expression and said

“Mmm! So this is how fierce the competition is in this household!”

Koneko-chan, Rossweisse-san and Ravel all sighed, and they earnestly said to Kunou

“…Welcome to the girls’ club of hell that is competing for Ise-senpai.”

“Hell is a strange interpretation. But when things get intense, the relationships of each member can change greatly even in half a day.”

“Kunou-san, it’s going to be difficult here, ok? First of all, let me tell you about the ranking and rules—”

…Early in the morning, I was already surrounded by the enthusiasm of the girls in my house. I guess, in order to become a harem king, I’ll need to get accustomed to these kinds of things. The Kiba group (Kiba, Gasper, Tosca, Valerie) who had been invited over for breakfast also remained on the sidelines as bystanders and they simply said

[It looks like it’s quite difficult.]

Kiba made a wry smile while he said to me

“It must be tough, Ise-kun.”

“…I suppose. I don’t even know what to do now.”

Then, Kiba changed the topic and asked me

“That reminds me, after the game concluded, it seems you were summoned by the Maou-sama, what happened?”

“Ah, just a small matter.”

Just as Kiba said, after the game with Barakiel-san, I alone was summoned by Beelzebub-sama. I went to Beelzebub-sams’s personal research facility in the Maou’s territory, and then Beelzebub-sama said to me

[Hyoudou Issei-kun, just one moment will be fine. I summoned you because there is something that I need to speak to you about.]

Saying that, Beelzebub-sama used a large screen to display an image. I couldn’t have imagined that it was actually—.

<<Yo, Ise. Is it spring on your side now? The battle over here is in full swing.>>

W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-W-WHAT IS THIS! The person shown there was Azazel-sensei! Moreover, it wasn’t a recording, it was a true, live broadcast!

[Azazel-sensei!? What is going on here!?]

I was so excited that I grabbed the screen as I shouted! I was so shocked that I pinched my own cheeks to verify that it wasn’t a dream. Sensei threw a spear of light

out towards somewhere while he continued

<<It's nothing surprising, this is simply a form of communication from inside the isolation barrier.>>

[S-Something like this is actually possible!?]

I thought that as soon as they went in there that I would never be able to see nor speak to them again, so this information really shocked me! Sensei said

<<Of course. We can contact each other regularly; if we couldn't communicate about the situation of the battle over here, I wouldn't be able to speak to you either, right? Also, if supplies aren't sent over to us, we won't be able to fight a protracted battle.>>

Thinking carefully about it, it made sense…. Sensei went into the barrier because he had made these kinds of preparations. I just didn't expect that the isolation barrier was so well prepared for. Beelzebub-sama continued to explain to me

[The only things that cannot exit from the inside are Sirzechs and the others, as well as Trihexa. The exchange of information and transfer of goods are all possible. This matter is currently confidential, and only a few people are aware of it.]

I-I see! So it was actually possible for them to receive information. Speaking of which, was it really alright to tell me such a secret…. Azazel-sensei dodged a certain object and continued

<<Using the information on Trihexa that we have obtained, it's possible that you guys might be able to develop relevant countermeasures, or approaches, right? If that's possible, perhaps this can be over in less than ten thousand years.>>

Information was constantly being updated from the inside and outside, and that could be used to shorten the battle against Trihexa. In that way, it might truly take less than ten thousand years.

<<Ah! What! Who are you talking with? Could it possibly be Sona-tan!?>>

I heard a very familiar, cheery voice! Serafall Leviathan-sama appeared on the display! This person doesn't appear to have changed very much either…. Sensei said

<<No, it's Ise. It looks like things over there have settled down a bit, so that's why we can get in touch with you.>>

Serafall-sama seemed to cry after she heard that.

<<Uuh, I really want to talk to Sona-tan soon! I! I'm going to collapse because of my Sona-tan deficiency!>>

…I'm sorry, Sona-senpai isn't here…. Indeed, because the former kaichou graduated, I've decided to change the way I address her to 'senpai'.

<<Fufufu, Serafall. Sona can't find out about the way we communicate. Didn't we all decide that only Ise-kun alone would know about this right now?>>

And then came a nostalgic voice that I had missed — it was Sirzechs-sama! Though, he was currently in his destruction form, rather than his usual red-haired appearance.

[Sirzechs-sama!?]

<<Hey, Ise-kun. Have you been well? You collapsed when we parted, so I was worried about you.>>

[I-I'm doing well! Perfectly healthy!]

Ah, being able to see Sirzechs-sama caused me to burst into tears! Being able to see Sensei, Leviathan-sama, and Sirzechs-sama as well right now, I'm already…!

[I-I…. I thought that I would never see you all again in my lifetime and that I wouldn't be able to speak to you again…!]

Seeing my manly tears, Sensei seemed uneasy.

<<Ah — don't cry now, don't cry. Although we may not be able to see each other face to face, we can at least talk to each other occasionally like this.>>

Really!? That was truly good to hear. …Yes, but it seems like I'm the only one to know about this secret, which makes it somewhat difficult knowing that I have to keep this from everyone else while I'm the only one who can see them…. Just as I began to enter into such thoughts, Beelzebub-sama changed the topic.

[Former Governor Azazel, Sirzechs, let us speak about the earlier topic.]

<<Hmm, having to fight while talking is just a bit difficult, so I'll make it brief.>>

Sirzechs-sama nodded, and Azazel-sensei began to explain

<<Ise, before we headed in here, there was a discussion between the VIPs of the Three Factions. Accurately speaking, it was before you rushed off to Agreas to save your parents that this matter was already decided on.>>

Beelzebub-sama said to me

[I will be establishing a secret intelligence bureau. Using an example from the human world, it would be similar to the American CIA, or the English MI6.]

—A secret intelligence bureau! It sounds like the establishment of an incredible organisation! I thought it had nothing to do with me until Sirzechs-sama said

<<—I hope that you can join it as an intelligence officer. From here on, there will be more and more people who act in order to take control of the world. It is necessary to protect the future, so it is necessary to remove evil while it is still being immature, which is why I hope that you'll be able to join.>>

—What! Is this for real!? I'm going to become an intelligence officer of this secret intelligence bureau!?

[…I-I'm going to be an intelligence officer!? I may have defeated villains several times, but…]

Azazel-sensei said to me with a serious tone

<<This is a request not only from Sirzechs, but also from me.>>

Beelzebub-sama also nodded.

[In the future, there will be more and more cases that will need to be dealt with secretly. That's why an organisation like this is necessary.]

Sirzechs-sama continued

<<—We plan to name the organisation [EXE][131].>>

[…[EXE]…[ExE] huh.]

…From [DxD] to [EXE]—. Beelzebub-sama said

[You originally belonged to the anti-terrorist team [DxD], and you also possess the flesh of [D×D] Great Red[141], and at the same time you are also called [DxD] 5. The next one after 'D' — is 'E', which is in the title of the organisation [EXE] that you will belong to. Don't you think that this is a fateful choice?]

…The next initial after the 'D' in my name of [DxD][151] is 'E' — and I will join [EXE]. Beelzebub-sama said

[…The organisation's establishment is planned for two to three years in the future. For now, we need to focus on post-war rehabilitation and the management of the international tournament.]

Sirzechs-sama said something that was even more shocking.

<<I hope that you will be able to stand at the centre of the organisation in the future.>>

[Centre!?]

You want me to be the leader!? No no, it's hard enough as it is just being a [King], no matter how you look at it, I'm not fit to act as the leader of a new organisation! I don't have the capacity or the ability for that!

[It's impossible! Someone like me…]

Just as I was thinking about refusing outright, Beelzebub-sama began to evaluate me.

[Sirzechs possesses transcendent power, and Former Governor Azazel possesses a vast network of relations; if someone could be the combination of both of them, it would be you.]

Sensei then said

<<To put it even simpler, in order to face the crises that will arise in the future, I hope that you can make preparations for them in my stead.>>

[Preparations?]

Sensei then said

<<—I hope that you can support the world from the shadows like Vali, and seek out the existences with transcendent power. At the very least, you must bring all of the Longinus users to our side.>>

[H-How could I possibly take charge of such an important role! I ignore politics, and I don't even understand my own judgement of good and evil either!]

I simply can't become a politician like Sirzechs-sama or Azazel-sensei. If it involves politics, and if I had to consider aspects such as whether my actions on the world were good or evil, I think my head would crack! Azazel-sensei continued

<<I'm not telling you to do it now. You won't do it on your own either. —From now on, you will learn together with your team, and you will have their support in the future. As a result, you will be the driving force behind [EXE].>>

Sirzechs-sama then continued

<<You are young. There are plenty of things that you want to do. There are also many ambitions that you wish to achieve. However, the approaching threats are also a fact of reality. …Ise-kun, among the many dreams that you hold, could you also add the protection of the world in with those as well?>>

At that time, I couldn't come up with a good answer. The best that I could do was to say

[I will think about it.]

After all, this wasn't the kind of question that I could easily reply to. Sensei and the others said that they would give me time to consider before the establishment of the organisation…. I…need to become a transcending being like Sirzechs-sama, and someone like Azazel-sensei who has a vast and resourceful network…?

…….

I can't do it right now. My strength and ability are both lacking. But—. I still have around ten thousand years of my life to go. Since that's the case, if I work on those things bit by bit starting from now…in the future, I'll be able to…. While those thoughts clouded my mind, the contest of the girls beside me intensified even further.

"Geez! Akeno, I will not forgive you if you take my boyfriend's 'first'!"

"Well, then I'll dedicate all sorts of 'firsts' to my lover Ise."

"If that's the case, then I'll make sure that I enjoy my 'firsts' much more!"

Rias and Akeno-san turned around and asked me at the same time.

""Ise, which do you think is better!?""

…….

…Even if it's my turn to answer, I'm troubled on what to say….

"W-Well, both."

—Even though I courageously answered like that

""Who starts first!?""

—Being asked that, I was immediately dumbfounded! Standing on the side, dad and mum smiled as they watch us—.

“Dear, this is youth isn’t it?”

“It is youth indeed, isn’t it?”

They seemed to be enjoying it. And then, at the end of our conversation, Azazel-sensei said

<<Ise, have you become a high-class Devil?>>

[Yes, all thanks to your care. …But, there are still some times when I feel inexperienced…]

Despite my restless mood, Sensei gave me a thumbs up and smiled as he said

<<—If breasts appear before your eyes, don’t think about anything else. You have embarked on the journey to becoming a harem king. Difficult matters are difficult matters, and breasts are breasts. Don’t mix them together, think about them separately. That’s what I think is an ‘Oppai Dragon’.>>

Difficult matters are difficult matters, and breasts are breasts. Don’t mix them together, think about them separately. …Perhaps in my subconscious, I never separated the difficult issues from breasts! Beside Sensei, after hearing what he had to say, Sirzechs-sama also said with a bold tone

<<That’s right. That may well be the case. —Ise-kun, I’m not distracted either when I grope Grayfia’s breasts. That’s how simple the situation is.>>

Even Sirzechs-sama (destruction form) said such a thing! …Even the great Maou-sama also considers politics to be separate from breasts! There is no doubt about it now! At the very end of the conversation, Azazel-sensei shouted

<<Ise! Dreams, love, fights, oppai, all of this is a part of youth! Grope breasts when you’re feeling troubled! At the end of that, you will have become a harem king! I believe in you! Do your best!>>

Alright! Sensei! I will carry my dreams and ambitions, and as I struggle through them, I will grope breasts! I will aim to become a harem king! That’s right, my youth is just getting started right now—.

Part 2

The evening two days after that—.

The new and old Occult Research Club members were gathered in the living room. Everyone was watching the television intently. The television was showing a special program from the Underworld on the international tournament. The cameras of the operations committee and the various factions were all gathered at the spacious venue. Today, the next part of the tournament schedule was to be announced. My team had already registered yesterday. It seems like the schedule for all of the teams that had registered by yesterday would be announced tonight, all at once. Because we held our strategy meeting during the previous announcement, we didn't get to see the live broadcast, but we were going to pay attention to it this time.

Various combinations appeared upon the screen. With 'VS' in the middle, the teams on the left and right side of it were decided by random, and the combinations would then be determined. Numerous team names were displayed quite quickly. There were more than I had expected. Each combination was announced one after the other. Because these were the combinations for the next battles, our next game and the one after that would be published…so far, there were no famous opponents. But, we couldn't be careless! We can't possibly predict what will unfold according to different sets of rules. There is also the issue of compatibility between teams. Every game was an experience that had something to be learned from. The game combinations continued to be displayed. All of a sudden, two combinations caught everyone's attention. The cameras also homed in on these two. The host in the venue announced these two unexpected team combinations in a loud voice

<<How unexpected! Such a combination has actually appeared at this stage! It looks like these games will be ones that every team in the competition will be paying attention to!>>

I could not help but hold my breath as I saw the two combinations, and I could not suppress the impulse welling up inside my body either.

"—Kuh. …So it's come…"

The television display was divided top and bottom, showing both combinations at the same time.

[Imperial Purpure] [161] Sairaorg Bael (Underworld Devil) team VS [Spear of the Heavenly Emperor] Cao Cao (Mount Meru) team

[Sekiryuutei of Blazing Truth] Hyoudou Issei (Underworld Devil) team VS [Trump Card of Heaven] Dulio Gesualdo (Heaven) team

As soon as these combinations were announced, thunderous cheers erupted from the audience at the venue. Given that they had seen something like this, it was only natural!

—A battle between Sairaorg, the embodiment of power and Cao Cao, the genius of technique!

—As for myself…I would be fighting against Dulio, the trump card of Heaven!

This was the International Rating Game Tournament…! This was a festival of dreamlike battles that I was participating in…! Ravel also stood up out of surprise.

"—It actually appeared so early; the teams of the most popular young Devils are competing with the representative teams of Heaven and Mount Meru…!"

Rias couldn't restrain her own excitement either and said whilst trembling

"…It is quite irresistible. Even though I'm not there in person, I can't help but tremble in excitement after seeing these combinations!"

…Yeah, what Rias said is true. Such a combination has already been made in the preliminary round! I desperately held back the excitement that was rising up within me. —However, tonight's surprises were not over yet. Mum walked over from the entrance and said

"Ise, there's someone who wants to see you?"

The person led into the living room by mum had a slim figure and their face was obscured by a hood. The guest took off their hood and exposed their face. The person who had appeared was a vampire that I had met before—.

"—Elmenhilde!"

I exclaimed in surprise as I stood up. Elmenhilde bowed, and then greeted us.

"Good evening, everyone. I saw the game. So there is one thing that I'd like to request."

After saying that, she approached me whilst her red pupils remained locked onto me. Elmenhilde unwaveringly asked me

"—Hyoudou Issei-sama, could you please include me in your team?"

Her words were so astounding that I momentarily forgot about the tournament matchup. —Indeed, the greatest festival of my high school life has just begun.

Notes

1. Tamagoyaki: A Japanese omelette, made by rolling together several layers of cooked egg.
2. This is commonly used by women to address their husband or lover, and would be similar to 'dear' or 'darling' in English.
3. Pronounced as Eguze, like a Windows executable program. When ExE is shown (lowercase x), it is pronounced as Eee Eee.
4. D×D: Dragon of Dragon.
5. DxD: Diabolos Dragon.

6. Kanji reads as Purple Gold Lion King.

Afterword

It's been a long time since volume twenty one was published. It's Ishibumi Ichiei here. Fans may have thought that after volume twenty one and DX3, the story would soon progress into the final arc, and this is indeed the case for volume twenty two. The final arc will have a very lively style, similar to how it was in the first three arcs. The fourth arc was the beginning of the events involving the Three Factions, exposing the Underworld and the darkness of the Rating Games, so in comparison to the first three arcs which were brighter, the plot was somewhat more serious. Having said that, part of the reasoning behind Ise's promotion to a High-class Devil is because the respective problems that were brought up in the early stages of the story with the upper echelons of the Devils and the Three Factions had to be dealt with first. The final arc will use a similarly bright tone to deal with the heroines, and I feel that everything that has been saved up so far should be pierced through at once. The final arc (possibly) won't reach volume thirty. —But there should be DX volumes in between, so I would be honoured if you can accompany me to the end. In summary, the final arc has finally begun. After the backbone of this story, Ise, rose to fame, all of the characters who have been introduced thus far are now participating in the International Rating Game, which has become the final open stage full of festivals. Following below are various individual topics.

Ise's promotion!

Finally! Ise has become a High-class Devil, and now stands on the starting line for his journey towards becoming a Harem King. Thinking back, this was the ambition that he held in the first volume, and it has finally progressed after twenty volumes. I'm sure many readers also feel deeply emotional about this. I was also burning up as I wrote the about the promotion ceremony. After the promotion, he immediately promised his future with Rias and Akeno as well. With his aim to become a Harem King, he made a public declaration that would make everyone happy. The decision on his relationships with the heroines is also a theme of the fifth arc. Please continue to pay attention to Ise's consciousness. Now, who will be the next to swear their future together with Ise, to become a member of his harem? Based on the present status quo, Ise's peerage includes his [Rook] Rossweisse, [Bishops] Asia and Ravel, as well as [Knight] Xenovia. Irina, Bova, and Bina are not part of his peerage, though they are his comrades and team members. Several other members of Ise's peerage are expected to appear in the final arc. The search for future peerage members is also one of the themes of this arc. However, the final arc probably won't be able to show all of his peerage. The reason that Rias has been separated from the team is

to emphasise the fact that Ise has become a High-class Devil. Taking into account the relevance of opponents, and the activity of the late heroines at the same time — especially Ravel and Rossweisse, whose roles in the fourth arc were rather inadequate, I chose to present them in such a way this time. The matches of Rias' team will also be mentioned throughout, so please rest assured. They will take the form of a separate description. After reading the volume, you will probably think that Ravel has a very active role in the final arc. Just as everyone saw, it would have been impossible to win in the tournament without Ravel. Ravel will have an important role to play in this final arc, so please witness her growth together with Ise as his manager.

The mysterious new characters

This time, the mysterious new characters of both Ise's and Rias' teams have appeared. The [Queen] of Ise's team, Bina Lessthan and the [Knight] of Rias' team, Lint Selzan. As for exactly who they are, please confirm this in the next volume or later. In this case, please also take notice of the mysterious [Pawn] on Rias' team. I think it will be interesting to see how the vacancies in Ise's peerage will develop in the future.

The competing groups for the International Rating Game Tournament

The world tournament has begun! It's been a long time since I last wrote a Rating Game. It's been around five years since a proper Rating Game like Sairaorg's (I did write about the rematch with Raiser in the first DX volume, but that is separate). Five years…five years!? What actually happened!? If a fan first started reading in middle school, it's actually been so long that they might think "I'm going to graduate soon"! The Rating Games were obviously a major theme of this series, but they were put aside. What have I been doing these past five years…. I'm sorry, when I think about it, it's my fault. In summary, at the very end, the matchups that were announced were Ise versus Dulio, and Sairaorg versus Cao Cao. However, basically only Ise's (as well as Rias' and Vali's) matches will be written about. So aside from those matches, I will avoid making them too detailed unless it is a very important match. It is more or less impossible to write about every single match. But the editors would also like to see the match between Sairaorg and Cao Cao, so if possible, this match and some others may be published in Dragon Magazine. For the readers who are interested, please check out Dragon Magazine or the Fujimi Fantasia Bunko website. Perhaps some of the games will be finished in the DX volumes. The editor-in-charge would also like to see the matches aside from Ise's ones, so perhaps the matches of the world tournament will be made up for in some unexpected form. (But please forgive me if it doesn't happen.) For comments or requests such as "I want to see this battle!", please be sure to mail the Fujimi Fantasia Bunko editorial department by all means if, as I would also be interested in writing other battles aside from Ise's one. Because it has been five years, I'm sure there are many wanted game matchups. But I will not write Ise's rematch against Sairaorg. For those two, I don't think I could write anything better than the tenth volume. So I apologise for that. Now, about the competition of the world tournament. There may be some contradictions or loopholes in the special rules for this and future matches, I will give priority to atmosphere and form, and then do my best to make it reasonable. Regarding the content of the games, not all of the matches that Ise faces will be smooth-sailing. After all, there are some powerful rivals participating, so it will not be a simple or easy journey.

Shiva, and the Heavenly Emperor, it's finally time for the gods!

In the previous afterwords…I have said that the last boss of the final arc may be Shiva. Just as I previously said, it will be closely related to Shiva. The Heavenly Emperor that has been mentioned in the background since the beginning of the third arc has finally appeared. Until now, there hasn't been a character where you might think "It feels like he's always so mighty", but that will become more active from now on. And all of the foreshadowed characters will also make an appearance. A challenge to the many Gods is also a theme of this arc. The Gods who have appeared around Ise have gradually been introducing themselves, and he has finally become an existence that the Gods take notice of, and as the author, I also feel deeply emotional about this. This was not something I could have imagined at the time of the first volume.

Next are the acknowledgements. Miyama Zero-sama, I am grateful to you every time. While preparing volume twenty two, my editor-in-charge changed. I worked with the previous Editor H-shi for eight and a half years, through thick and thin for a long time. I take this occasion to thank you once again from the bottom of my heart. And for the newly appointed Editor T-sama, I look forward to working with you from now on. It is my first time working with an editor younger than myself, so I'm also a bit nervous. The upcoming twenty third volume includes Ise versus Dulio, a dream showdown. Various characters associated with the Church will also appear, and needless to say, the Church trio will have some great scenes. However, it's not just about the progression of the tournament, there are also people who are secretly watching Ise and the others…?

There is some foreshadowing here to say that resolving the enemies is also a part of the final arc, so please look forward to this while you wait. —I originally wanted to talk a bit more about the contents of volume twenty three, but according to the publishing schedule, the next one is DX3. It will include the dreamlike short story of Xenovia and Irina's first meeting [Cross Crisis]. I think this is a very valuable one, so if you're a fan of Xenovia and Irina, it's a must-see. Thank you for that as well. Ah, in future, there may be something planned in regards to the final arc, so please also check out Dragon Magazine to see what happens.

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